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"I am indebted . . . to far more people, writers and living persons, than I can name. I have borrowed and stolen, have sucked the blood of thought, from so many that I no longer know whom to thank for what."[1] These words, from the pen of a distinguished teacher under whom the present writer was fortunate enough to study, hold particular relevance for a dissertation whose chief theme emphasizes the theologian's dependence upon the persons and the epochs that have gone before him. The gratitude that a man holds within himself is always much greater than that which he has the opportunity to express. Here I can acknowledge only those debts which have been incurred directly in connection with the writing of this dissertation.

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The writer has been blessed by the efforts of friendly and efficient librarians throughout his student days. Particular thanks is to be rendered

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[1]Henry Grady Davis, Design for Preaching (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1958), p. vii.

here to Miss Alice Dagan and her staff at the library of Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary and to Miss Ruth Dunn and her staff at the Swift Hall Library, University of Chicago.

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INTRODUCTION

The term "history" appears on the title-page of this dissertation, and it dominates every page of what follows. The reader would be mistaken, however, if he considered this to be an essay in ecclesiastical history; just as he would be in error if he judged from the name of Albrecht Ritschl, who also dominates the dissertation, that this is an essay in Christian biography. The truth is that this dissertation purports to be a theological essay, written by one who has never been trained in the discipline of historical analysis (this will become only too obvious!), in spite of the fact that history has been a continuing source of fascination, particularly as a resource for Christian theology and as a constitutive element of Christian theological methodology.

In these days, it is almost commonplace for a student of theology to express a concern for history; but the writer sympathizes with the reader who questions the appropriateness of Albrecht Ritschl's presence in a discussion of this concern. Indeed, a part of the burden of this dissertation is the proof of Ritschl's relevance for the consideration of how history is related to Christian theology. A biographical analysis does not provide this proof. Such proof is grounded in a thoroughly theological interpretation of the man, his work and his intention. The proof consists in the illumination of the almost forgotten fact that Ritschl was by training and inclination a church historian, and that he remained one to his death.[1] To consider his later

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[1] See infra, p. 58.

systematic theological work apart from this fact is to ignore what is perhaps the crucial factor for understanding Ritschl and his theology. The dissertation can, then, in some sense, be characterized as a theological appreciation of Albrecht Ritschl, the historian who turned to theology, written by an apprentice theologian whose inclination is to turn to history.

From these remarks, it can be concluded that this dissertation deals both with a theologian and with a theological problem. Although it is not clear, even in the mind of the writer, which is to be considered as more important, it is clear that by far the greater effort has been expended in the analysis and understanding of the man. In the final analysis, what follows should probably be assessed as a contribution to Ritschliana, augmented by brief suggestions for resolving the theological problem of the relation of history to systematic theology. It may be helpful, in this introductory section, to clarify the Fragestellung with respect to both of these aspects of the dissertation.

It has been apparent for some years that the final critical word has not been said about Albrecht Ritschl and his work.[1] The critical-scholarly attention paid him in the generation since 1930 has been exceedingly spare,[2] and it has for all practical purposes illumined only one or two aspects of his thought--its ethical, philosophical, and philosophical-theological presuppositions and its doctrinal elaborations (or the lack of them!). Evaluations have proceeded from various persuasions on the basis of this analysis, ranging from the admiration of Albert Temple Swing[3] to the ruthless and even

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[1]See infra, pp.156-57, for a detailed discussion of the comments of Professors Hugh Ross Mackintosh and Jaroslav Pelikan, who have called for a re-assessment of Ritschl.

[2]For a discussion of this scholarly attention, see infra, pp.121-25.

[3]Albert Temple Swing, The Theology of Albrecht Ritschl (London and Bombay: Longmans, Green and Co., 1901).

condescending comments of Karl Barth.[1] By and large, however, Ritschl has been nearly forgotten--recalled at moments only to be showered with criticism.

There are certain obvious questions to be raised about the range and adequacy of the critical scholarly analyses of Ritschl's work and about the overwhelmingly negative evaluations that have been drawn from the analyses. In regard to the critical analyses, the question arises as to why ethical and philosophical considerations should dominate the secondary literature when so much of Ritschl's own work (at least two-thirds, by a conservative estimate)[2] is primarily historical in character. Even more important is a question which the secondary literature has not even touched upon: What is the significance of the quantitatively more important historical work for the more influential theological work? Or, to put it in different terms: Ritschl himself devoted most of his years and output to the investigation of and grappling with the material of the Christian tradition, but one finds scarcely a mention of this devotion in the extant secondary literature, not to mention the total omission of any attention paid to the interrelation between this concern for the tradition and the more explicitly constructive theological work.[3] It would appear, then, that any contemporary analysis of Ritschl must come to terms with this strange discrepancy between the object of Ritschl's

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[1]Karl Barth, Die Protestantische Theologie im 19. Jahrhundert (Zuerich: Evangelischer Verlag AG. Zollikon, 1952).

[2]See infra, pp. 58-60.

[3]Broadly speaking, the following works are historical in nature: Die Entstehung der altkatholischen Kirche; Die christliche Lehre von der Rechtfertigung und Versoehnung, Vols. I and II; most of Ritschl's collected essays; Geschichte des Pietismus, 3 vols. The constructive works, all of which are historically oriented, might include: Die christliche Lehre von der Rechtfertigung, Vol. III; Theologie und Metaphysik. The only constructive works which are free from extensive historical excursuses are the shorter ones: Die christliche Vollkommenheit and Unterricht in der christlichen Religion.

own concern and the concerns set forth by the critical analyses of his work. From this point of view, it might be said that the present state of Ritschl scholarship is unsatisfactory on grounds of intrinsic considerations, to be found in the published output of Ritschl himself.

A question is also to be raised concerning the extremely negative evaluations of Ritschl which are so prevalent today. This question is raised on grounds of extrinsic considerations: Can a man who inspired and even dominated so many of the greatest minds of nineteenth century Protestant thought be so completely perverse a theological resource as the contemporary opinion would assert? A list of those men who were drawn to Ritschl in his own day and afterwards reads like an abridged Who's Who of Protestant Theology: Adolph von Harnack, Wilhelm Herrmann, Ernst Troeltsch, Bishop Nathan Soederblom, Ferdinand Kattenbusch--to name a few. The point is not that all of these figures were Ritschlians (although an impressive number were), but that these seminal minds of post-Ritschlian theology and church-life found in Albrecht Ritschl a man of startlingly different proportions than the man portrayed in the theological text-books and journals today.[1] This fact, too, looms so importantly before the contemporary Ritschl scholar that he cannot avoid it.

These questions, raised on the basis of intrinsic and extrinsic evidence, form the Fragestellung for any contemporary study of Albrecht Ritschl. Such a study is plainly of little value if it proceeds as if there were nothing new to say about Ritschl (thereby accepting the present state of Ritschl scholarship) or if it fails to offer a solution to the strange

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[1]For a detailed discussion of this popular contemporary textbook image of Ritschl, see my "Albrecht Ritschl and His Current Critics," The Lutheran Quarterly, XIII (May, 1961), 103-112.

discrepancy between what critical scholarship has said about Ritschl and the structure and sequence of the man's own work.[1]

This dissertation attempts to interpret Ritschl within the context of this Fragestellung. The larger part of its argumentation is a demonstration of the thesis that the secondary literature on Ritschl has overlooked the significance of the most important part of the Ritschlian corpus--the historical writings; this literature has thereby seriously qualified the adequacy of its own conclusions in presenting a full understanding of Ritschl and his work. The thesis of this essay is that in approaching Ritschl's work one's principle of interpretation must acknowledge that his constructive theological achievement is inseparable from his historical judgments and commitments, resp, concerning the Bible, early Christianity, Catholicism, the Reformation, Lutheranism, and Pietism. The argument suggests that it is the historical factors in Ritschl's thought--rather than the psychological, philosophical, or philosophical-theological factors--that are really the system-shaping factors in his theological achievement. Proceeding along these lines, the dissertation suggests a comprehensive scheme for interpreting Ritschl's work: The career of his theological work took the shape it did because he understood history as he did, because he was committed to this understanding, and because he accepted the responsibility for the theological activity which commitment to such an understanding of history would entail. This activity consists almost wholly of documentation (including historical investigation and biblical exegesis), defense, and proclamation (or even propagandizing) of a certain historical continuity and its heritage. His understanding of history

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[1]This writer's contention that Ritschl must be interpreted on the basis of the historical works, which critics heretofore have ignored, accounts for the comparatively few references to the other secondary literature in the body of this dissertation.

demanded that this documentation be undertaken; this documentation led naturally to the polemic against hostile groups; documentation and defense immediately revealed the lines which systematic elaboration would have to take if his understanding of history were to remain a live option in his own day. Underlying this interpretive scheme is the concern for historical continuity. This is the key to understanding Ritschl's work--so goes the argument; indeed, his theological achievement owes its shape to his preoccupation with a certain historical continuity. The precise character of this preoccupation will be elucidated below.

The theologian who stands at the center of this dissertation certainly has been relegated to an historical limbo by contemporary theological discussions; but this is by no means the case with the theological problem that is dealt with in the following discussion. This problem--the significance of history for Christian theology--has called forth an enormous amount of discussion in the past few decades, and its peak seems nowhere in sight. Despite this prolonged and vigorous discussion, there is by no means widespread agreement as to what the term "history" means or precisely what the "problem" is which it poses for the theologian, not to mention agreement on the resolution of that problem. Although they cannot be discussed in detail here, several of the alternative approaches to history can be enumerated as follows: (1) The Heilsgeschichte school which was dominated by J. C. K. von Hofmann (professor at Erlangen, died 1877). This approach lifts up certain biblical and cosmic events (e.g. creation, the eschaton) in which revelation occurs so as to make them the measure of all prior or subsequent history. These events are so dignified as to render negligible the significance and effect of

contingency and development within the historical continuum.[1] (2) The existentialist approach, represented by the contemporary German theologians, Rudolf Bultmann[2] and Friedrich Gogarten[3] (among others). This school of thought has followed up Ernst Troeltsch's analysis of the relativism of history (i.e., "der Historismus"),[4] which leads man directly to the existential moment of decision. This decision, insofar as it leads man to authentic existence, affords him the possibility of overcoming the meaninglessness which historicism carries with it, while at the same time taking into account the uniqueness of each relative moment in history. (3) The metaphysical approach, as articulated by members of the "process" school of philosophical theology stemming from S. C. Alexander[5] and Alfred North Whitehead.[6] This group gives attention to the metaphysical structure which inevitably sustains the movement and relativity of history, as well as the existential moment of decision. This larger metaphysical structure reveals the comprehensive scheme from which history derives its meaning and from which the relative moments derive their ultimate worth.

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[1]See, for example von Hofmann's understanding of Scripture, in Biblische Hermeneutik (Noerdlingen: C. H. Beck, 2880), chap. iv.

[2]Rudolf Bultmann, The Presence of Eternity: History and Eschatology (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957).

[3]Friedrich Gogarten, "Zur Frage nach dem Ursprung des geschichtlichen Denkens, Eine Antwort an Wilhelm Kamlah," Evangelische Theologie, XIV (1954), 226-38.

[4]Ernst Troeltsch, Christian Thought: Its History and Application, trans. F. von Huegel (New York: Meridian Books, 1957), pp. 67-146.

[5]S. C. Alexander, Space, Time, and Deity (2 vols.; London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1920). See also his "The Historicity of Things" in Philosophy and History, ed. Raymond Klibansky and H. J. Paton (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), pp. 19ff.

[6]Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1929), pp. 74-75.

These three broad approaches do not exhaust the alternative ways in which theologians are dealing with history. But they do suggest the variety of perspectives and the confusion of meanings ascribed to the term "history" and the "problem" that it poses for theology. This range of perspectives suggests that the most pressing task facing the student who is interested in this problem is the definition of terms.

This dissertation approaches the problem of history in terms which are different from all three of the alternatives mentioned above. Its argumentation recognizes that the discussion to date has laid down the guidelines or Fragestellung for any future handling of the problem. This Fragestellung implies on the one hand that the problem of relativism and the demands of human existence cannot be overlooked in any attempt to deal with history in theology, but that on the other hand, the Christian concern for transcendent meaning in history must not be sacrificed to modern scepticism or cynicism. And, although the metaphysicians have by no means argued their case in a completely persuasive manner, the student who chooses to deal with this problem cannot overlook their suggestions. In Chapter III, this dissertation sketches an understanding of history which attempts to take all of these factors into account.[1] But, proceeding from a careful definition of terms, the argument of this dissertation suggests that the most satisfactory resolution of the problem of history lies in a direction which these other approaches have not pursued. If theologians are to take history seriously in their work, they must ponder the significance of the empirical history (or tradition) of the Christian community for their theological methodology. If this dissertation has any contribution at all to make to this problem, it lies in the following assertion: That the history of God's people is constituted by

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[1] Infra, pp. 128-136.

God's action of redemption which is in turn his action of self-revelation; the totality of this history, as it is focussed in any present moment, constitutes the only adequate principle of knowledge and certainty that the Christian theologian has at his disposal. Insofar as it sets forth this understanding of history and elucidates Ritschl's theology in terms of this understanding, this dissertation constitutes an essay in theological methodology. The author hopes that its contribution in this area, although only a poor beginning, will not be overlooked.

The thesis outlined above--that Ritschl's theological achievement owes its shape to his preoccupation with a certain historical continuity--pertains essentially to this discussion of theological methodology. At this point it will be helpful to discuss the methodological implications of this thesis. We must deal with the questions: Of what does this preoccupation consist? and What does it mean to be "preoccupied" with a certain historical continuity? The answers given to these questions here recur again and again in this dissertation,[1] providing a key for understanding Ritschl's theological work and demonstrating one way in which history comes to play a role in systematic theology.

This preoccupation certainly consists of participation in the reality of the continuity--participation in its reality as <u>indicative</u> and as <u>imperative</u>. To participate in the reality of the continuity as <u>indicative</u> can mean several things. It means that the man's theology is informed as to its substance, purpose, and justification by the heritage as he understands it. Proof that any man's thought is genuinely informed by a certain heritage must always remain problematical. It is most likely to remain a matter of the interpreter's opinion. The discussion of such larger considerations is postponed to Chapter III. It is a somewhat easier undertaking to demonstrate

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[1]See, for example, <u>infra</u>, pp. 118-119.

that Ritschl's explicit purpose consists in the positive enunciation of a certain theological heritage, as well as in the polemical argumentation which he believed to be necessary against those who either rejected or misunderstood the heritage to which he was beholden. This demonstration finds its appropriate place in Chapter II. It is appropriate in that place also to show how Ritschl found the chief source for the justification of his theological achievement in the heritage of thought and faith which was conveyed by the historical continuity in which he stood.

A man's participation in the reality of an historical continuity as indicative is precisely the most difficult sort of thing to nail down in an academic discussion, because the indicative is always given. It is prior to reflection; it does not need to be talked about or demonstrated or justified; it is the base from which talk, demonstration, and justification all proceed in a man's work.

To participate in the reality of the historical continuity as <u>imperative</u> is another matter. As imperative, the historical continuity is not a thing possessed, but rather a thing to be grasped. This means that there must be probing, reflection, definition, interrelating, analysis--all of the activities which are not necessary when continuity is given as indicative. Inasmuch as these activities under the imperative are for the most part explicit, one should expect to find them rather clearly visible in Ritschl's work. If the thesis is to be established persuasively, there can be little ambiguity--such as was argued for above--about the presence of these activities in his work.

These activities which reflect Ritschl's participation in a certain historical continuity as imperative are clearly visible in Ritschl's work, and Chapters I and II demonstrate their presence. These activities manifest

themselves in two forms. The first deals with the category within which the historical continuity is to be located and by means of which discontinuities are to be distinguished. No imperative can be heeded, no reality grasped, unless there exists a key or category or some sort of understanding of just what is sought or to be obeyed. The fact that Ritschl took great pains to elaborate just such a category enhances our appreciation of the depth of his preoccupation with historical continuity. Secondly, activity under the presence of continuity as imperative must include extensive effort spent in demonstrating that the continuity in question does indeed exist empirically and that it has existed in the past. It has been all too little noted by students of Ritschl that a considerable portion of his output and of his years were dedicated to the meticulous demonstration (one might even call it an exhausting tour de force) that the continuity of which he spoke was in fact an empirical reality. Chapter I documents Ritschl's efforts to develop a category which could bear the weight of the historical continuity and his efforts to prove the existence of this continuity in respect to his interpretation of the history of early Christianity.[1] Chapter II performs this same task in respect to his interpretation of Catholicism, the Reformation, Lutheranism, and Pietism.

The dissertation brings the theologian and the problem together in the third chapter, where my own constructive suggestion for dealing with the role of history in systematic theology is applied as a critical tool for evaluating the manner in which Ritschl related history and theology in his own

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[1]Throughout this dissertation, the term "early Christianity" coincides with Ritschl's own periodization, covering that period up to the latter half of the third century which is marked by the appearance of the Apostolic Constitutions.

work. Here it becomes obvious that this is an essay in theology rather than in ecclesiastical history or Christian biography. It also becomes obvious that the two aspects of this dissertation--the theologian and the theological problem--belong together. If it be true that the first Fragestellung outlined above leads to an appreciation of history as the system-shaping factor in Rithschl's theological work, then it becomes equally clear that his work can be neither properly evaluated nor appropriated by the contemporary theological discussion unless the second Fragestellung--which deals with the problem of history--be pursued to a satisfactory conclusion. This, in short, describes the goal and method of this dissertation, as well as the shape which it has assumed in the pages that follow.

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM OF CONTINUITY IN THE MOVEMENT FROM APOSTOLIC TO CATHOLIC CHRISTIANITY

The sources for a study of Ritschl's interpretation of early Christianity are the two editions of Die Entstehung der altkatholischen Kirche[1] and the second volume of Die christliche Lehre von der Rechtfertigung und Versoehnung (whose subtitle is: "Der biblische Stoff der Lehre").[2] The former work is an almost perfect example of Ritschl's activity under the historical continuity as imperative. In it he applies a clear, though imprecisely formulated, category of the continuity in a determined effort to document its empirical reality.[3] The second volume of Rechtfertigung und Versoehnung, coming twenty-five years later, is marked by a different purpose. It is a good example of Ritschl's stance within the continuity as indicative. He has attained precision and maturity in the formulation of the category which designates and expresses the historical continuity, but he is not so much concerned with proving that that continuity exists as he is devoted to the positive enunciation of the heritage of that continuity as it is refracted through his

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[1]Albrecht Ritschl, Die Entstehung der altkatholischen Kirche (Bonn: Adolph Marcus, 1850 and 1857). Hereafter cited as Entstehung. Unless otherwise noted, citations are from the second edition, 1857.

[2]Albrecht Ritschl, Die christliche Lehre von der Rechtfertigung und Versoehnung (3 vols.; Bonn: Adolph Marcus, 1874, 1882, 1889), Vol. II. Hereafter cited as R.u.V.II. Citations are from the third edition, 1889.

[3]Ritschl, Entstehung, pp. 4-5.

categories of thought, resp. the Reformation Lebensfuehrung.[1] This essay does not undertake to analyze the second volume of Rechtfertigung und Versoehnung, because it presupposes precisely that which this dissertation seeks to demonstrate, namely, the preoccupation with historical continuity which gives shape to Ritschl's work. Therefore, it does not lend itself to the careful documentation of Ritschl's underlying concerns. Die Entstehung der altkatholischen Kirche does lend itself to such documentation. Nor does the second volume of Rechtfertigung und Versoehnung add anything to our understanding of Ritschl's

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[1]The term Lebensfuehrung occurs frequently in this dissertation. Its meaning is set forth in detail elsewhere (infra, pp. 69-73), but it deserves explanation here. For the purposes of this study, Lebensfuehrung is considered to be synonymous with the term Lebensideal, which Ritschl uses more frequently in his own work. This dissertation employs the less familiar term for the simple reason that Lebensideal has been so loaded with pejorative connotations (notably in Karl Barth, pp. 601-605) that it is nearly unusable in this discussion. Barth interprets the term as referring chiefly to the ideal which man has constructed by his own powers as the goal for his life, towards the realization of which he bends every effort. For Barth, the term is nearly synonymous with bourgeois morality. In the present writer's opinion, the terms represent Ritschl's existential concern. They refer to the fact that the Christian faith characteristically deals with the direction and mode of human existence rather than with either doctrine or ecclesiastical institution. The root fuehren denotes this concern; the notion of Ideal also points to this concern, insofar as it refers to the concrete goal that man's will sets for his life. The difference between the various manifestations of Christianity (Roman Catholicism, Pietism, etc.) is measured in terms of the different configurations of existence (i.e., Lebensfuehrungen or Lebensidealen) which they engender. Ritschl's propensity for personalizing the Christian faith led him to discuss Lebensfuehrung in terms which emphasize individual vocation (Beruf). This emphasis is no doubt the source of Barth's interpretation. Barth's error lies in his overemphasis on the particular forms which this vocation takes, as if Ritschl were canonizing nineteenth century German buergerlich modes of life. A more balanced reading suggests that Ritschl's use of the terms did not intend any such glorification of particular forms, but that it meant to emphasize the significance of the Christian religion for the concrete realities of human existence. Ritschl conceived of the most satisfactory Christian Lebensfuehrung as the life which commits itself wholly to the responsibilities of this world--chiefly love for fellowman and a vocation in society--while trusting completely in God's providence for one's ultimate justification and redemption. (See infra, note one, p. 78.) Throughout this study, I argue that this concept of Lebensfuehrung constitutes the category by which Ritschl evaluates the historical development of the Christian community.

preoccupation. It is important, however, to call attention to the fact that it is taken up completely with the positive enunciation, out of the biblical materials, of the continuity which is central to Ritschl's work.[1] This in turn calls attention to the ultimate soundness of the thesis, as well as to the position which this particular work holds in the overall scheme of Ritschl's theological endeavor.

The Baurian Background

Ritschl's investigation of early Christianity cannot be interpreted adequately apart from the background furnished by the work in this area which was undertaken by Ferdinand Christian Baur. It was Baur who stimulated Ritschl to his first genuinely scientific theological work.[2] In respect to the investigation of early Christianity, Ritschl accepted Baur's Fragestellung in spite of fundamental differences of opinion which led to his final repudiation of the Baurian hypotheses.[3] It can be said that even Ritschl's independence and mature reflections upon early Christianity are in some sense dependent on Baur, because Ritschl reached those reflections by grappling with Baur's work, ultimately rejecting it in a decisive manner.

Baur set the stage for both his own work and Ritschl's when he established continuity between the various historical manifestations as the chief

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[1]This purpose is particularly well expressed in the introductory remarks to R.u.V. II, especially pp. 9-20, 24-25. In these places, Ritschl makes it clear that he is attempting to trace the biblical understanding of the Christian Lebensfuehrung which centers in reconciliation with God, as he himself has defined that reconciliation. He allows for the fact that the Bible and the Reformation may not hold identical beliefs on this issue, but he also affirms the fact that they are essentially one.

[2]See Otto Ritschl, Albrecht Ritschls Leben (2 vols.; Frieburg i. B.: Akademische Verlagsbuchhandlung von J. C. B. Mohr, 1892) I, 55ff., 75-77.

[3]See infra, pp. 30-33, for a complete documentation of this fact.

concern of the historian of early Christianity. As I shall note, below, he viewed these manifestations as antithetical to one another; thus it follows that the chief problem is the rapprochement between antitheses. His task is to explain how historical movement is possible, resp., how the apostolic community could possibly have developed into the Catholic ecclesiastical institution. Such an approach raises the question of historical continuity from the very beginning. It raises the question of how two different manifestations of Christianity can yet be continuous in one and the same religion; and it asks how two different historical phenomena can yet be continuous in one and the same historical continuum. This Baurian approach also starts from the ex parte interpretation of apostolic and Catholic Christianity as being in some sense discontinuous, at least prima facie. The implications of this assumption will be examined at a later place.[1]

F. C. Baur elaborates his interpretation of early Christianity in his, Das Christenthum und die christliche Kirche der drei ersten Jahrhunderts.[2] In this work he lays down his basic understanding of the history of early Christianity as the development of a root-principle which entered the Judeo-Hellenistic world and grew, by overcoming several sets of mutually destructive antitheses, into the Catholic church.

The Roman Empire provided the spirit of universalism;[3] Greek philosophy had developed a high degree of moral consciousness;[4] Judaistic religion

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[1] Infra, pp. 37-39.

[2] F. C. Baur, Das Christenthum und die christliche Kirche der drei ersten Jahrhunderts (1st ed.; Tuebingen: L. Fr. Fues, 1853) (2nd ed.; Tuebingen: L. Fr. Fues, 1860). Hereafter cited as Christenthum. Citations are from the 1st ed. unless otherwise noted.

[3] Ibid., pp. 4-5.

[4] Ibid., pp. 11-16.

had arrived religiously at the stage of full monotheism, with an emphasis on God's holiness;[1]--thus the stage was set for Christianity. That is to say, the spirit of mankind had developed to the point at which the recognizable characteristics of Christianity could enter into history and win a reception. Christianity entered this matrix as a unique moral principle enunciated by Jesus. Baur writes, in his interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount,

> Wie die Makarismen der Bergrede das, was der Christ in seinem innersten Selbstbewusstsein ist, als das an sich Seiende auf absolute Weise aussprechen, so gibt sich das Urspruengliche und Principielle des Christenthums in der form des absoluten sittlichen Sollens sowohl in dem antithetischen, gegen die Pharisaeer gerichteten Theile der Bergrede, als auch in dem weiteren Inhalt derselben kund, in welchem Jesus auf die Reinheit und Lauterkeit der Gesinnung, die nicht blos in der aeussern That, sondern in der innern Gesinnung bestehende Sittlichkeit und den jede willkuerliche Ausnahme und Beschraenkung, jeden falschen heuchlerischen Schein, jede Halbheit und Getheiltheit ausschliessenden sittlichen Ernst der Gesetzesbefolgung mit allem Nachdruck dringt. . . . Das Allgemeine wird so zwar nie als solches in seiner abstrakten Allgemeinheit ausgesprochen, wenn aber die einzelnen Bestimmungen, in welchen die Erfuellung des Gesetzes besteht, immer wieder darauf zurueckkommen, dass dem Aeussern das Innere, der blossen That als solcher die Gesinnung als das gegenuebergestellt wird, was allein dem Thun des Menschen seinen wahren sittlichen Werth gibt, so ist diess ein vom Mosaismus wesentlich verschiedenes neues Princip, schon sofern das, was das Gesetz zwar auch enthaelt, aber hur an sich, nun auch ausdruecklich zur Hauptsache gemacht und als Princip des Sittlichen ausgesprochen wird. Die quantitative Erweiterung wird von selbst zum qualitativen Gegensatz, es wird dem Aeussern das Innere, der That die **Gesinnung**, dem Buchstaben der Geist entgegengesetzt. Diess ist das wesentliche Grundprincip des Christenthums, und in diesem Dringen auf die Gesinnung als das Eine, worin der absolute sittliche Worth des Menschen besteht, ist es ein wesentlich Neues.[2]

Having isolated this as Christianity's root-principle, Baur observes that if it was to "enter on the path of historical development," it needed to assume concrete form.[3] This it did in the person of Jesus as the fulfilment of Jewish Messianic hope; and this "consciousness of Jesus as Messiah was taken up in the national consciousness and enabled to spread and become the general consciousness of the world."[4]

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[1] Ibid., p. 17.

[2] Ibid., pp. 28-29. Underlining added.

[3] Ibid., p. 36.

[4] Ibid.

Even in this concrete form, however, Christianity would have been no more than a particularistic Jewish sect, if a basis for believing in Jesus' higher significance had not been introduced into the situation. Such a factor was introduced in the person of the Apostle Paul and his doctrines. Paulinism became an antithesis to Jewish particularistic Christianity (represented by James and Peter). And with the introduction of Paulinism begins the unending dynamic development of Christianity, which Baur charts as the continual struggle of antitheses within Christianity, which are transcended by a series of Christian syntheses. In the period which holds our present attention, Baur traces this dynamic through two stages: Pauline and Jewish Christianity, transcended in an incipient form of the Catholic church; Gnosticism and Montanism, transcended in the firmly established Catholic church. I shall elaborate briefly on Baur's description of these two stages.

Paul and Paulinism represent for Baur the high spirituality of the Christian faith, freedom, and liberty; whereas Peter and Jewish Christianity represent the material and particular aspect of it.[1] Petrinism and Paulinism represent the famous Baurian "double gospel." As such they present microcosmically the dialectic between universalism and particularism whose macrocosmic features I shall discuss at a later point.[2] Within the New Testament canon, this conflict is represented in the Paulinizing tendencies of the authentic Pauline epistles and Gospel of Luke (with the later influence of Marcion) pitted against the Judaizing tendencies of the Apocalypse and the Gospel of Matthew, abetted by the post-apostolic Pseudo-Clementine literature.[3]

This first sharp antithesis was maintained by the unresolved personal enmity between Paul and Peter. But after their deaths a final rapprochement

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[1] Ibid., pp. 61-66.

[2] Infra, pp. 27-30.

[3] Ibid., pp. 73-83.

was achieved through a continuing, gradual accommodation by both parties as they interacted upon each other. Within the canon, the Epistle to the Hebrews, Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, James, I Peter, the Pastoral Epistles, and the Acts of the Apostles are to be classified as mediating works.[1] This rapprochement results in a microcosmic unification of the universal and the particular in that the organizational forms of the emerging Catholic church are Jewish, whereas the ongoing spirit of the church, universalistic in its defiance of the legalistic claims of these forms, is Pauline.[2] The result is a Catholic church of gentiles whom Paul has converted and whom the Jews have organized.

The culmination of this first Catholic rapprochement is preserved in the Johannine Gospel. Here, under the pseudonym of the Jewish-Christian evangelist and eastern saint, a spiritual-universalistic theology (which exceeds even the Pauline, in this respect) and western practice (concerning the Paschal observance) are given a powerful and popular expression. This combination of the church at Rome with the theology of the Fourth Gospel represents for Baur catholicism's final resolution and transcending of the antithesis between Peter and Paul, with its final exclusion of the Judaizing party.[3]

The issue in this first struggle between antitheses concerned Christianity as a principle of salvation--whether this salvation were to be tied literalistically to material particularities, or whether it could be a matter of the spirit, free and universal. The second antithesis raises the controversy to the level of cosmic issues, i.e., how Christianity is to be conceived of as a world principle.[4] Both members of the antithesis, Gnosticism and

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[1] Ibid., pp. 109-124.
[2] Ibid., pp. 105-107.
[3] Ibid., pp. 172-174.
[4] Ibid., p. 175.

Montanism, pursue their interests, Baur holds, at this cosmic level. He writes, after concluding his discussion of both heresies:

> Je klarer, sobald die Grundanschauung des Montanismus richtig aufgefasst ist, das Wesen desselben sich durchschauen laesst, um so berechtigter erscheint seine Zusammenstellung mit dem Gnosticismus. Die Anschauungsweise des Einen ist so transcendent, wie die des Andern. Dem Montanisten, wie dem Gnostiker, liegt das eigentliche Wesen des Christenthums weit hinaus ueber Gegenwart und Wirklichkeit, nur richtet der Gnostiker seinen Blick in eine Vergangenheit zurueck, in welcher alles erst seinen absoluten Anfang nimmt, der Montanist in eine Zukunft, in welcher alles sein Ende hat, und das Diesseitige vor dem Jenseitigen verschwindet. Christus ist dem Einen, wie dem Andern, das absolute Weltprincip, waehrend aber der Gnostiker mit diesem Princip sein ganzes Weltentwicklungssystem construirt, hat es fuer den Montanisten nur eine die Welt destruirende Bedeutung....Auch in den gnostischen Systemen ist Christus, als das den Weltentwicklungsprocess bestimmende Princip, der Wendepunkt, in welchem alles zurueckgeht, damit das Ende mit dem Anfange sich zusammenschliesse; waehrend aber hier alles einen unendlichen Verlauf hat, kann der Montanismus die letzte Katastrophe nicht rasch genug erfolgen lassen....So verschieden der Begriff ist, welchen die Gnostiker und die Montanisten mit dem Pneumatischen verbanden, so wollten doch beide die reinen Organe des geistigen Princips sein. Wie die Gnostiker sich vorzugsweise als die pneumatischen Naturen betrachteten und die uebrigen Christen nur zur Stufe des psychischen Lebens rechneten, so wurde von den Montanisten der Unterschied der pneumatikoi und psychikoi geltend gemacht, um auf die, die sich nicht zu ihrer Lehre vom Paraklet bekannten, die katholischen Christen, mit Geringschaetzung herabzusehen. Beide stehen innerhalb desselben Gegansatzes, nur ist die Sphaere desselben bei den Montanisten weit beschraenkter.[1]

I have quoted at length here because this passage reveals with unusual clarity the way in which Baur sets up his antitheses, shows their interrelations, and points the way towards a new synthesis.

Baur classifies five schools of thought as Gnostic: Valentinus, Basilides, Marcion, Pseudo-Clement, and the Docetics. He relates these schools and their individual characteristics in several ways. But they all serve to demonstrate that Gnosticism was speculative-philosophical in origin; it sought to illumine the principle of the world's development; as it did so, it revealed itself basically to be a very transparent rationalism, founded on the immanent relations of the self-consciousness of the spirit,[2] wrapped in "symbolic mythical clothing."

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[1] Ibid., pp. 44-45.

[2] Ibid., pp. 233-234.

Gnosticism posed the danger for Christianity of dissolving its specific historical character into the thin element of a general transcendental view of the world.[1] It played up to that aspect of catholicity which sought to rise above everything particular and merge it into the universality of the Christian principle; but it ran afoul of Catholicity's insistence that the positive historical elements of Christianity be maintained.[2]

Montanism threatened the complementary danger of particularism. Millenarianism, coupled with ecstatic prophecy and rigoristic morality characterised its reactionary effort to re-implement primitive Christian views. If its emphases were carried out consistently, particularism would reach its culmination in complete withdrawal from society. Further development in Christianity would be precluded. Catholicism at this point had to react in a way complementary to its reaction over against Gnosticism. It had to break open this separatistic closure, so that Christianity could plant itself firmly in the world and develop as broadly as was necessary for its healthy survival.[3]

Catholic Christianity presented, to use Baur's terms, both a dogmatic and a hierarchical antithesis to these two heresies; but the dogmatic antithesis could never have been victorious without the hierarchical antithesis. The dogmatic antithesis to Gnosticism was not, in the final analysis, brought off by the more subtle Alexandrian theologians--they sympathized too much with it. Rather, the dialectical antithesis to Gnosticism was erected by Tertullian and Irenaeus, because of their unyielding efforts to lay bare the essentially non-Christian character of Gnostic religious-philosophical

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[1] Ibid., p. 234.

[2] Ibid., p. 176.

[3] Ibid., p. 247.

speculation.[1] This antithesis, however, was never in itself more than a convincing alternative to Gnosticism; it could not overwhelm its foe, because its keystones--Scripture and apostolic insight--were effectively neutralized by the Gnostic's own claims to secret apostolic wisdom which could alone interpret Scripture adequately. In order to fasten their claims, the Catholics fashioned two other arguments: the orthodox content of apostolic teaching, which was preserved in the regula fidei; and the legitimate transmission of that teaching, in the episcopal succession. These two arguments made it possible to link the present Catholics with the past--with Christ and the apostles--and to give objectivity to their doctrines. Only with objectivity and tradition in their hands was it possible for the Catholics to brand the Gnostics as heretical.[2]

The Montanist antithesis was almost wholly political in character and its resolution, inasmuch as there was little or no dogmatic disagreement involved. The Montanist drive to purify the church denied forgiveness to the large number of lapsi that emerged from the persecutions. The Montanists would use this denial of forgiveness as a means of tightening discipline and withdrawing from the world to await the eschaton. This ran counter to the whole tone of permanence which underlay the notion of the episcopate and its succession; the bishops anticipated no sudden eschaton, and they were eager to lay the basis for continued existence within the world. The power of the keys, proclaimed by the Roman bishop (either Victor or Zephyrinus) granted forgiveness and set the stage for penance. Baur concludes,

> Hiemit war zwar die reine Idealitaet der Kirche verschwunden, aber die Idee der Kirche war praktisch geworden
> . . . . . .
> und ebendamit der grosse Schritt geschehen war, die Kirche in eine Bahn

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[1] Ibid., pp. 249-52. [2] Ibid., pp. 257-58.

> hinein zuleiten, auf welcher auch die suendhafte Beschaffenheit ihrer Mitglieder kein Hinderniss fortgehenden Verwirklichung sein konnte.[1]

Rigorism and millenarianism were thereby rejected; morality was humanized; the Holy Spirit was institutionalized.

The Catholic church is thus firmly established in the episcopate which holds the regula fidei and the power of the keys. This Catholic development can be understood as a product of religious development in which the church as a whole symbolizes its unity of pure teaching in the company of these episcopal successors to the apostles, and in which the individual congregation symbolizes its unity in Christ under the governance of his episcopal representative.[2] It is a very simple hierarchical and theocentric relationship between congregation and leader, but at the same time it is a flexible relationship which adjusts easily to pressure from the outside. The heart of Baur's interpretation of this Catholic hierarchy is contained in these words,

> Durch den Episkopat erhielt sie [the church] ihre bestimmte Form, in den Bischoefen erst hatte man Subject, auf welche man sich alles uebergegangen denken konnte, was Christus selbst den Aposteln als ihren hoechsten Vorzug ertheilt hatte, in ihrer Person concentrirte sich und stellte sich dar, was die Kirche im Ganzen wesentlich und ihrem eigentlichen Prinzip nach war.[3]

Christianity has thus evolved into the Catholic church. Historical continuity has been established in meticulous detail between first and third century Christianity. As Baur charts the course of this continuity it has been the essence or peculiar principle of the church, moving from root-principle, embodied in the concrete form of belief in Jesus as the Messiah, through the antithesis of Christianity as universal or particularistic principle of salvation, and through a final antithesis of Christianity as

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[1] Ibid., pp. 268, 270.

[2] Ibid., pp. 260-261, 278-279.

[3] Ibid., pp. 274-275.

universal or particularistic principle of world development--culminating in catholicity which is both cosmic and soteriological, universal and particular. The significance of Baur's treatment of historical continuity in this manner must be elaborated in more detail, in the next few pages. Baur's historical investigations into early Christianity and the Fragestellung which he introduced must be clearly understood; only then is one able to understand the situation in which Albrecht Ritschl stood when he undertook the foundational studies of his youth which shaped his entire theological achievement; only then can one grasp the Fragestellung which Ritschl wholeheartedly shared in, as well as the historical judgments which he just as vigorously rejected.

Baur set the question of the interpretation of early Christianity in the framework of the problem of historical continuity. This followed inescapably from his concern for movement in the history of the church. The movement of events and their continuity was the chief concern of the church historian, in Baur's opinion. The category which served as the basis for the continuity in the history of Christianity was the Idee of the church--its essence or Geist. This is clear from what Baur writes in a book which appeared one year before his history of the first three centuries, Die Epochen der kirchlichen Geschichtschreibung, a book which he considered to be an introduction to the Christenthum.[1] In a memorable passage, Baur observes that historians generally fail to grasp the meaning of the church's history. He goes on to suggest the reason for this failing,

> Es liegt mit Einem Worte in dem Missverhaeltniss der Idee zu den Erscheinungen, in welchen sich die geschichtliche Entwicklung derselben darstellen soll. Die Idee schwebt noch in weiter Ferne und in unbestimmter Gestalt ueber den Erscheinungen, auf die sie bezogen werden muss, sie ist

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[1]F. C. Baur, Die Epochen der kirchlichen Geschichtschreibung (Tuebingen: Ludwig Fues, 1852). Hereafter cited as Epochen. See Baur, Christenthum, pp. iv-v.

> noch nicht kraeftig und lebendig genug, um den geschichtlichen Stoff, wie die Seele den Leib, zu durchdringen und zu beseelen und in dieser organischen Einheit das bewegende Princip der ganzen Reihe der Erscheinungen zu sein, in welchen die Geschichte der christlichen Kirche ihren Verlauf nimmt. Oder soll denn etwa darueber noch ein Zweifel sein, ob die Geschichte der christlichen Kirche die Bewegung der Idee der Kirche ist, somit auch nicht blos aus einer Reihe von Veraenderungen besteht, die nur in zufaelliger Folge sich an einander reihen? Spricht man mit Recht von einer Idee der Kirche, so muss auch diese Idee, wie jede andere, den lebendigen Trieb in sich haben, aus sich herauszugehen, und in einer Reihe von Erscheinungen sich zu verwirklichen, die nur als die verschiedenen Seiten des Verhaeltnisses betrachet werden koennen, das ueberhaupt zwischen der Idee und ihrer Erscheinung stattfindet.[1]

In the Christenthum, likewise (although more implicitly than in the methodological introduction just quoted), Baur attributes the origin and movement of the church's history to the Hegelianesque Geist or Idee.[2] This movement of Geist or the Idee of the church explains how the Christian community moved from Jesus' teaching to the Catholic ecclesiastical institution.

From this application of the Hegelian category to the historical continuity of Christianity, one can conclude that Baur's interpretation of early Christianity is ontological and religious. It is ontological, because the category of the Idee in history is ultimately identical with the general philosophical problem of the relation of the universal and the particular. And when he traces the continuity in the movement from apostolic to Catholic Christianity, it is a continuity rooted in the movement of being or the universal within the particular.[3]

This movement of the Idee, the Hegelian Geist, within the particularities of history is also the career of the relation between spirit and

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[1] Ibid., pp. 247-49.

[2] Baur, Christenthum, pp. 9-10. "Die Formen, in welchen bisher das religioese Leben sich bewegte, zerfallen mehr und mehr, sie werden zuletzt voellig leere, des die erfuellenden Inhalts entaeusserte Formen, aber nur aus dem Grunde, weil sie dem Geiste, welchem sie zur Vermittlung seines religioesen Bewusstseins dienten, zu eng und beschraenkt geworden sind."

[3] See, for example, Baur, Epochen, pp. 267-68.

letter. As I documented above,[1] a relation between spirit and letter constituted for Baur the essence of Christianity, as well as the basic structure of Jesus' message. In other terms, the relation between spirit and letter is the initial and central problem which faced early Christianity.[2] He located this problem and concern initially in Jesus' understanding of his own relationship to the Mosaic law.[3] He recognized that Jesus' preaching did in some way modify the external, literal applicability of that law upon himself and the members of his community. This modification is towards the pre-eminence of a spiritual authority over a literal, material one. Baur expresses it as the superordination of disposition and spirit over act and letter in such terms as imply an absolute demand that man bring his entire being--all of his moral and spiritual capabilities--into consonance with the spirit (or ultimate intention) of the law.[4] What is at stake is a fundamental distinction between that which is material and enslaving, the product of man's own endeavors, on the one hand, and that which is spiritual and liberating, the work of God, on the other. As Baur prosecutes his historical investigation, he traces what is in effect the ongoing tension and interrelation between these two factors.[5]

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[1] Supra, p. 17.

[2] It may prove helpful if the reader keeps in mind that at a later point I will demonstrate a notable similarity in the manner in which Ritschl conceives of this central problem of early Christianity, even though he attaches a quite different significance to it. See infra, pp. 32-33.

[3] Supra, p. 17.

[4] Baur, Christenthum (2nd ed.), pp. 28-29.

[5] See, for example, the manner in which Baur renders the Peter-Paul conflict plausible by relating it to the spirit-letter conflict within the preaching of Jesus himself, ibid., pp.46-47. Ritschl did this, too, in the first edition of his Entstehung, p. 108.

The category which bears and expresses the historical continuity of the phenomena of early Christianity in Baur's scheme is the Idee of the church, the Geist, whose movement does in fact establish the continuity of history. Its movement manifests itself in the career of spirit and letter (or matter) as they interrelate one with the other. But, inasmuch as this category is at the same time an ontological one as well as a religious one--being identical with the general philosophical problem of the universal and the particular--broader ramifications come immediately into focus. These ramifications are to be seen in the fact that Baur understands himself to be dealing simultaneously with three inseparably related conceptions in his preoccupation with the above-mentioned category of continuity.

In the first place, he understands himself to be dealing with the constitutive principle of history. Baur makes this especially clear in Epochen. History is the movement of the universal (the Idee or das Allgemeine) as it relates itself to the particular (die Erscheinungen); in the case of the history of Christianity, this is the universal Idee of the church.[1] In a most helpful passage, Baur asserts that Christianity can be nothing else but the concrete form that the Idee of the church assumes in the visible manifestations of history,

> Etwas Anderes kann daher auch nicht der substanzielle Inhalt der geschichtlichen Entwicklung der christlichen Kirche sein, als eben diese Einheit [i.e., the unity of absolute and particular, resp. as expressed in the unity of divine and human in Christ], alles kann nur darauf hinzielen, in den verschiedenen Formen, in welchen sie aufgefasst werden kann, sie fuer das christliche Bewusstsein so zu realisieren, dass es selbst nur die Form fuer diesen absoluten Inhalt ist.[2]

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[1]Baur, Epochen, p. 249. Note that Baur's assessment of the catholic episcopate is that it represents a natural stage of the development of the church's understanding of itself, i.e., of its Idee. See infra, note three, p. 54.

[2]Ibid., p. 251.

Secondly Baur is dealing with the constitutive process of the self-actualizing of being or Geist. The Geist actualizes itself by the very process of going out from itself into the Erscheinungen which constitute history.[1] This is the familiar Hegelian framework in which Baur works. In his Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte, Baur expresses this explicitly in his positive evaluation of Hegel. He writes that Schleiermacher made a step towards understanding the proper relation between the absolute and the particular, the objective and the particular, in Christianity. But he never overcame subjectivity; this remained for Hegel to accomplish. Hegel made it clear that Christianity is

> die sich explicirende absolute Idee selbst. Die absolute Idee ist Gott als der Absolute, in dem Processes des Denkens sich mit sich selbst vermittelnde Geist. Das Christenthum ist daher wesentlich dieser Process selbst, der im Denken, als der Natur des Geistes, sich explicirende Lebensprocess Gottes.[2]

He goes on to say that the Christian consciousness is the subjective side of the "Processes der Vermittlung mit sich selbst zum subjectiven Bewusstsein sich bestimmenden absoluten Geistes."[3] He concludes with the assertion that Christianity is not just Gefuehl, but Denken, i.e., "die Selbstbestimmung des Geistes."[4]

Thirdly, in dealing with the relationship of the universal and the particular, Baur is dealing with the essence of Christianity. In Christ, the Christian community has seen the perfect unity of the two, the unity of the divine and the human. The history of the Christian church is the history of

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[1]Baur, Lehrbuch der christlichen Dogmengeschichte (Tuebingen: L. Fr. Fues, 1847 and 1858), p. 251. All citations are from the 1858 (2nd) edition. Hereafter cited as Dogmengeschichte.

[2]Ibid., p. 355. (Italics mine.)

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid.

the attempt by the Christian consciousness to express this unity in an adequate manner.[1] The catholicizing tendency of the early centuries is a stage in this ongoing expression. Therefore, Baur can say of the final papal development of this Catholic episcopate:

> Dieselbe Einheit Gottes und des Menschen, die in der Christologie, als dem Inbegriff des dogmatischen Systems der Kirche, der auf seinen bestimmten Begriff gebrachte absolute Inhalt des religioesen Bewusstseins ist, ist im Papstthum die absolute Form, in welcher die realisirte Idee der Kirche angeschaut wird. Jeder, welcher das Dogma der Kirche glaubig in sich aufgenommen hat, und dem Papst als dem Statthalter Gottes und Christi glaubig und willig sich unterordnet, ist durch diese Vermittlung sich der seligmachenden Einheit mit Gott Bewusst und es schliesst sich so in beiden zusammen, im Dogma und im Papstthum, die ganze Menschheit der katholischen Kirche zur absoluten Einheit mit Gott zusammen.[2]

These three conceptions must be held together as we assess Baur's own understanding of what is involved in his historical study of early Christianity. With all of this in mind, it can be said that for Baur, Christianity's initial and ongoing concern for the relationship between spirit and the letter describes the primal thrust which is actually constitutive of the historical process. This ongoing relationship can be said to be _in_ history, but even more, for Baur, it _is_ history. History is nothing other than the career of _Geist_ (or _Idee_ or God) as it comes to actuality through the process of self-objectification. This process does indeed constitute history's own entelechy, and this is the source of its continuity. This career of actualization is constituted by the recurring action which brings spirit and matter, idea and appearance, divinity and humanity, into relationship. Therefore, for Baur to trace this continuous action of relating the universal and the particular is simultaneously to _interpret_ history and to _account_ for its being; but to interpret and account for history is at the same time to lay bare the actualization of being or _Geist_. So that finally, when Baur asserts that _the_

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[1]Baur, _Epochen_, p. 251. [2]_Ibid._, p. 253.

root-principle of Christianity and the motive power of Christian history is this continuous actualization of a relationship between spirit and letter, he is saying the Christian history is the consummate revelation of the career and being of Geist-itself or being itself.

Therefore, it can be said that when Baur prosecutes his concerns within the context of an historical investigation, that investigation automatically becomes an enterprise of accounting for the constitutive factors of history and its being. That is, it becomes an aetiology of history. This aetiology in Geist provides the key to the meaning of the problem of spirit versus matter, as well as the source of the unity which apostolic and Catholic Christianity share as events within the same historical continuum.

Ritschl on Early Christianity

Baur, then, clarifies the movement of Christian history, specifically its early history, by referring its continuity to the career of an "essence" or"Grundprincip" of Christianity (or of the church) which is simultaneously the principle of being and of history, their unity lying in the fact that the principle of being drives towards actualization in and through history, and consummately in Christianity because in Christ (and in the church) spirit and matter are perfectly united. It is important to understand that Albrecht Ritschl accepted this Fragestellung. The various historical manifestations of early Christianity, because of their apparent irreconcilability, pose the problem which historical investigation must resolve. As it did with Baur, the attempt to resolve this problem involves Ritschl with the fundamental issue of continuity. The student should not permit Ritschl's considerable differences of opinion with Baur to hide this genuine agreement in Fragestellung.

The next few pages will concentrate on these considerable differences; thereby they will also contribute to an understanding of the unity of approach that exists between these two men. In this unity lies that feature of Ritschl's thought which this dissertation attempts to illumine.[1]

Within this overarching unity in approach, Ritschl differs from Baur in a decisive manner. This sharp difference has its basis in the manner in which Ritschl understood the Fragestellung and in the significance which he attached to it and the issues concomitant to it. This manner of understanding is in turn influenced by certain other judgments and commitments, which will also come under discussion.

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[1]At this point, a word is in order concerning the two editions of Entstehung. Generally speaking, one can compare the two editions thus: the first edition (1850) expresses as clearly as the second (1857) Ritschl's preoccupation with historical continuity and his intention to demonstrate the physical unity of the historical continuum in its movement from the first to the third century, as well as the discontinuity in belief and practice between these two epochs (see infra, pp. 54f.).

The 1850 edition differs from that of 1857 in that it interprets Catholicism as a product of Paulinism in its victorious struggle against Judenchristentum (see 1st ed., Chap. IV, pp. 264-327, pp. 602-604). This means that Ritschl accepts Baur's general notion of the antitheses between Pauline and Jewish Christianity. A look at the table of contents of the two editions reveals the way in which this interpretation affected the first edition. Instead of a chapter on the diverse character of Jewish Christianity, one strand of which is termed Judenchristentum, the first edition groups all Jewish Christians under that term (see infra, pp. 43-46). This chapter is followed in the 1850 edition with a chapter on Paulinism, as it developed in antithesis to Judenchristentum. The 1857 edition speaks rather of Gentile Christianity. The conclusion is to be drawn that the 1850 edition sees only the two Baurian antitheses, Judenchristentum and Paulinism. The 1857 edition sees in the same historical material two very diverse groups, Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians; the former are by no means all Pauline, and the latter are not all Judaizers. Another important difference is that the 1850 edition still uses Baur's notion of dialectical movement as the category of continuity, whereas the 1857 edition uses the category of Lebensfuehrung. It should be noted that Ritschl emphatically rejected the Baurian overtones of the 1850 edition (see "Vorrede" to 1857 edition, and Otto Ritschl, op. cit., I, 272ff.). In the light of all this, the Baurian elements of the first edition can be overlooked, inasmuch as they hold little significance for the purposes of this dissertation. The apparent ease with which Ritschl laid aside this Baurian influence is not

The most decisive difference between Ritschl and Baur centers in their understandings of the category which bears and expresses the historical continuity in Christian history. Baur had understood this category to consist of the Idee of the church or the Geist. Ritschl understands this continuity to consist of the Lebensfuehrung which he considered to be central to Reformation Christianity.[1] This is his category of historical continuity. This is the criterion by which he measures varying historical manifestations of Christianity and compares them for continuity or discontinuity. Therefore, it must be concluded that when Ritschl pursues the same historical investigation of the same problem in early Christianity as Baur did, he does not do so at all from an ontological concern. His concern, in distinction from Baur's, is personal and religious.

This personal and religious concern is revealed in the fact that Ritschl's historical investigations push continually not towards the elucidation of the ontological career of Geist, but rather towards an illumination of the personal relation between God and man, the relation of reconciliation. Like Baur, Ritschl locates this problem of reconciliation initially in the distinction between spirit and letter (or matter), as it is expressed in Jesus' own understanding of his relationship to the Mosaic law. Ritschl, too, understood that Jesus' preaching modified the literal,

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surprising. He had been attracted to Baur, not because of an interest in metaphysics or speculation, but because of his admiration for Baur's disciplined, scientific approach to the study of history. He first read Baur in his days at Halle, in connection with his already well-delineated interest in history, particularly the history of the doctrine of Versoehnung. (See Otto Ritschl, op. cit., I, 54-55, 75-77). Baur helped Ritschl define his vocation as a scientific historian--not his philosophical position; there is no record that Ritschl's attachment to Baur was part of a search for a philosophical mentor. The differences between the two editions of Entstehung represent a jettisoning of that aspect of Baur's work that was never of primary importance to Ritschl. He never did depart from Baur's example of disciplined, scientific study of history.

[1]Supra, note one, p. 14.

external applicability of that law in a way that gave pre-eminence to a spiritual authority over a literal or material one. Ritschl expressed this in terms of man's acknowledging the ultimate claims which his own highest end places upon him; these ultimate claims are found in those parts of the Mosaic law which embody the highest end, namely, love for God and man. Finally, like Baur, Ritschl considers that the issue at stake is the fundamental distinction between that which is material and enslaving, the product of man's endeavors, on the one hand, and that which is spiritual and liberating, the work of God, on the other. His historical investigation traces the ongoing interrelation of these two factors. But, as I have already said, this interrelationship does not constitute the career of being; rather, it concerns the individual's relationship to God.

For Ritschl, the chief problem posed by the interrelation of these two elements is the maintenance of a proper equilibrium between divine and human factors within the God-man relationship, the personal religious concern which resolves into the question, "Upon what basis can the individual be reconciled with God?" The distinction between spirit and letter or matter is the distinction between what God does for man and what man is thereby impelled to do on his own. The Grundprincip of Christianity for Ritschl (and for his own theology, as noted below) is the assertion that the God-man relation of reconciliation is grounded in the spirit (i.e., in faith or trust in God) rather than in the literal or legal works which man can effect in his own behalf.

Just as Baur's formulation of the central problem of early Christianity implied ramifications which extended far beyond a simple tabulation of historical data, so when Ritschl enunciates this problem as being that of man's reconciliation with God, he sees a significance in this enunciation

which reaches beyond the plain data of first and second century history.

Firstly, the question of reconciliation is the central religious question which faces man; it directs all of his life's activity.[1] And the decision concerning what is the proper equilibrium between divine and human factors in this relationship of reconciliation ultimately determines the individual's attitude towards what that life-activity is and amounts to.

Secondly, inasmuch as the question of reconciliation is inseparable from the question of how man is related to God and how God's salvation is appropriated, it is the center of the Christian revelation.[2] Ritschl does not say, as Baur does, that his formulation of the central concern of early Christianity is identical to the essence of Christianity. But it is so decisive a factor in the Christian revelation that Ritschl can often pursue his historical investigations as if it were that essence.[3]

Thirdly, as he was to point out thirteen years later in the first volume of Die christliche Lehre von der Rechtfertigung und Versoehnung, the problem of reconciliation constitutes the center of the Christian theological system.[4] Ritschl's conviction that reconciliation is so central to the

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[1]This is the sort of sweeping consideration that runs through a great deal of Ritschl's work. I have discussed and documented it in detail in "Albrecht Ritschl and His Current Critics," The Lutheran Quarterly, XIII (1961), 103-112.

[2]For appropriate materials, see preceding footnote and footnote four, this page.

[3]So, for example, he can almost ignore Gnosticism in his study of early Christianity, presumably because he thinks that it does not touch on what he considers to be central in Christianity. He devotes about twenty pages to it in his Entstehung. Consider also his idiosyncratic interpretation of the antignostic fathers; see infra, p. 49.

[4]Ritschl, Die christliche Lehre von der Rechtfertigung und Versoehnung (3 vols.; Bonn: Adolph Marcus, 1870, 1882), I, 1. All citations from the 2nd (1882) edition. Hereafter cited as R.u.V. I.

Christian revelation and theological system is demonstrated in his life-long study of this issue; he himself dates this concern from his student days.[1]

This, then, is what Ritschl had in mind when he isolated the problem of the relationship between spirit and letter as the initial and central concern in early Christianity. It should be clear that Ritschl's understanding of the problem of early Christianity is so different from Baur's that it transmutes the material interpretation of this historical epoch so as very nearly to obscure the common Fragestellung which the two men share. Ritschl applies the Lebensfuehrung, which emerges from the interrelation of spirit and matter which he terms "reconciliation," as the category which serves as the bearer and expression of historical continuity. This brings an attitude towards history and continuity which is markedly different from Baur's. For Ritschl, history is not a process of being which is constituted by the ongoing relationship of spirit and matter. Rather, it is a given continuum about whose provenance Ritschl cares not and says very little. But within this continuum there has been an ongoing attempt by the Christian community to express what it knows through revelation to be the proper relationship of spirit and letter. Within this continuum the Christian church has sought to express its understanding of this central problem of how man is related to God; but this expression does not thereby constitute the total continuum of history. If history is a continuum which is given, within which there is presumably more than one tendency discernible, then Ritschl's assertion that his formulation constitutes the central problem of that continuum entails a value-judgment and selectivity in a way that does not arise in Baur's historical investigations.[2] In effect, then, Ritschl's historical

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[1] Ibid., "Vorrede zur ersten Auflage."

[2] Infra, pp. 38-39.

investigation of early Christianity is a study of Christianity's ongoing expression of this one reality, of reconciliation, a tracing of its changing comprehension of this one reality; just as for Baur, proceeding from his ontological outlook, the history of early Christianity is the tracing of ongoing unfolding of Geist or the Idee of the church as it actualizes itself in the matter of history. And Ritschl's analysis is not simply a neutral analysis, because Ritschl selects one particular expression of Christianity's position to be normative, namely, Jesus'. So, Ritschl's history of the emergence of the old Catholic church is actually an investigation of the community's changing understanding of the God-man relationship, one stage of which justifies the adjective, Catholic.[1] Because it is an investigation of the change in that understanding from epoch to epoch, one of which is normative, it is at the same time an assessment of that Catholic stage.

With all of this in mind, it must be concluded that when Ritschl, turning his attention to the same initial problem as Baur, within the same Fragestellung concerning continuity in history, prosecutes his own concern within the context of an historical investigation, that investigation becomes an enterprise of evaluating history; that is, it becomes an axiology of history. The axiological key of the Lebensfuehrung which emerges from reconciliation with God provides the meaning to the problem of spirit versus matter, as well as the source of the unity and difference which exists between apostolic and Catholic Christianity as events within the same historical continuum.

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[1]Ritschl's use of the term "Catholic" is ambiguous. When he uses the term in contradistinction to apostolic and Reformation Christianity, it is a pejorative term. However, it is clear that when he uses it to designate the main stream of Christian tradition (see infra, pp.64 ff.), it is a term of approbation. The proper connotation of such usage in this study is generally evident from the context in which it appears.

But there is still another issue at play in Ritschl's approach to historical continuity and to early Christianity. His propensity for axiology leads him to use the category of Lebensfuehrung just as effectively as a criterion of discontinuity in history. This stems from the fact that he has made a commitment to Reformation Christianity which compels him to assume an emphatically Protestant position, which for him entails documenting a discontinuity between apostolic and catholic Christianity. Thus, Ritschl writes in the introduction to Entstehung,

> Ueber die dunkle Periode der nachapostolischen Zeit glauben wir am sichersten Klarheit gewinnen zu koennen, wenn wir unsere Aufgabe bestimmt fassen als die Geschichte der Entstehung der altkatholischen Kirche aus dem Urchristenthume....Mit dieser Untersuchung hoffen wir einmal eine Luecke der Dogmengeschichte auszufuellen, dann aber auch eine Schuld der protestantischen Geschichtsforschung abzutragen.... Zweitens aber ist die Loesung unserer Aufgabe, der Entstehung der einen altkatholischen Kirche aus dem einfachen Keime des Evangeliums durch die mannigfaltigen Formen der urchristlichen Vorstellungen und Richtungen hindurch nachzuforschen, eine wissenschaftliche Pflicht, welche die protestantische Theologie seit ihrem Ursprunge der katholischen Geschichstanschauung gegenueber noch nicht erfuellt hat. Wenn die roemisch-katholische Kirche die Festsetzung ihrer wesentlichen Formen von Christus und den Aposteln herleitet, so entstand fuer die Theologen der Reformation nicht nur die Aufgabe, diesen Anspruch als unhistorisch abzuweisen, sondern es ergab sich auch die Nothwendigkeit, die von dem urspruenglichen Sinne des Evangeliums und von den Formen der apostolischen Lehre und Einrichtungen abweichende Gestalt der katholischen Religionsanschauung und Verfassung auf historischem Wege zu begreifen.[1]

Unless he can document this discontinuity, he can carry out neither his programme of positive enunciation of the Reformation Lebensfuehrung nor his programme of polemic against its foes--chief of whom are the Roman Catholics.[2]

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[1]See Ritschl, Entstehung, pp. 3-4. Underlining added in part only. This quotation occurs in both editions.

[2]If this sentence can be said to involve a comprehensive scheme for the interpretation of Ritschl's entire work (and I shall argue below that it does), then the reader can begin to understand how indispensable history and its interpretation are for Ritschl.

Ritschl will not designate this discontinuity as a "fall of the church,"[1] because he is emphatic that there is a certain kind of continuity between first and third century Christianity. This is a simple, almost physical, unity of the historical continuum. Such a continuity is necessary if historical movement is to be explicable; without it historical writing could not be scientific, because alterations in the continuum should have to be ascribed to accident or to some sort of supernaturalism.[2] Theologically, however, this continuity is not significant (note the contrast to Baur, for whom this physical continuity was the whole significance, because it was ontologically related to the Idee of the church). More important is the continuity in understanding reconciliation, and at this point Catholicism, specifically in its third century roots, cannot pass muster, in Ritschl's judgment. Ritschl insists that the historian must be fair and objective in his openness to the movement and physical continuity within the historical continuum. But his theological commitment to the Reformation, or, we might say, his propensity for axiological judgment, overpowers this objectivity in the final analysis.

Baur, too, had made a commitment to the Reformation, as well as a contradictory commitment to the Hegelian dialectic. But he handled this conflict of interests more adroitly than Ritschl, with the result that he did not have to posit a discontinuity between apostolic and Catholic Christianity--even though he began from the ex parte distinction that the two are not one. He modified this ex parte starting-point in a way that Ritschl could not--by his commitment to ontological continuity in the movement of

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[1]For a full discussion of this, see Ritschl, Entstehung, pp. 4-10, and R.u.V. I, pp. 12-14.

[2]See preceding footnote.

Geist. He had to be concerned with movement, but he did not have to oppose first century Christianity to third century Christianity in the way that Ritschl was driven to by his historical commitments. Baur superordinated this commitment to ontological continuity over his Reformation commitment to discontinuity. His dialectical propensity did not prevent him, however, from assessing the Reformation as a higher level of the self-actualization of Geist, even as the telos of that self-actualization.[1] Thus, he was able to satisfy both his Reformation commitment and his Hegelian Tendenz.

We now turn to a summary of Ritschl's historical interpretation of early Christianity, in which the theological considerations to which I have just pointed will assume concrete form. For Ritschl, as for Baur, the problem posed by the history of early Christianity was the transition from apostolic Christianity to the old Catholic church.[2] But for him that transition is not comprised by a dialectical Catholic synthesis of the antithetical components of a "double gospel." Rather, the Ritschlian scheme recognizes one fundamental Hebraic-oriented message which appeared in Christ and permeated the apostolic preaching; then, because of a combination of external and internal pressures, this gospel and its community became estranged from their Jewish heritage; this estrangement, coupled with cultural and political pressures, brought the alteration of belief and polity whose consequence was the old Catholic church.

On the basis of this general scheme, and because of the theological considerations that I have discussed above, Ritschl took specific issue with

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[1]See Baur, Epochen, pp. 248-52 for his understanding of the Protestant position vis-a-vis Roman Catholicism.

[2]Ritschl, Entstehung, pp. 3-4.

the predisposition of Baur and his colleague, Albert Schwegler.[1] Specifically, Ritschl insists that this dialectical reading of history (a) violates the integrity of the Pauline literature (both canonical and post-canonical) by interpreting it as incipient Catholicism, and thereby fails to show how Paulinism could actually develop into Catholicism:[2] (b) violates the integrity of Catholicism by failing to recognize its non-Pauline, yet nevertheless apostolic elements;[3] (c) violates the integrity of Jewish Christians, not all of whom were Judaistic;[4] (d) engages in a circular argument by presupposing that all Jewish elements in Christianity are antithetical to Pauline Christianity and then using the presence of these elements in subapostolic Christianity to prove the existence of an anti-Pauline party;[5] (e) emphasizes so much the antagonism between the antithetical elements in Christianity that their final reconciliation can only be accidental and contrived, so that although the dialectic can account easily for the inner diversity of Christianity, it cannot account for its inner unity;[6] (f) imposes an unrealistic burden upon the historian by insisting that the rise of Catholicism be explained solely by internal causes to the exclusion of external ones.[7] And, in what is finally its greatest distortion, the predisposition of the dialectic for synthesis forces it to misread the entire movement of this period, namely as a bringing together of both Jewish and Gentile elements; whereas the nub of Ritschl's whole

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[1]Schwegler died in 1857. Ritschl was reacting in particular against his Das Nachapostolische Zeitalter in den Hauptmomenten seiner Entwicklung (2 vols.; Tuebingen: L. F. Fues, 1846).

[2]Ritschl, Entstehung, pp. 13-14.

[3]Ibid., p. 23.

[4]Ibid., pp. 22-23.

[5]Ibid., p. 17.

[6]Ibid., pp. 18-20.

[7]Ibid., p. 23.

interpretation is to insist that Catholicism represents the culmination of Gentile Christianity's estrangement and final divorce from its Hebraic-Judaistic heritage.[1]

It must be noted that the task that Ritschl set for himself does not entail for him a full-blown discussion of the beginnings of the Christian community, the essence of its faith and its historical development. It does entail charting the career of one particular problem in the history of early Christianity. This one problem is what Ritschl is interested in; it is, as we have seen,[2] the central problem for Christianity; and it is in the church's changing stance towards this problem that the transition from apostolic community to Catholic church is to be grasped. This is where the impact of Ritschl's personal and religious concern, as opposed to Baur's ontological and religious concern, is to be seen most clearly. This problem is first described as the question of "wie das Christenthum sich zu dem mosaischen Gesetze und den auf dasselbe begruendeten Einrichtungen und Sitten verhalte."[3] However, as his discussion moves on, it is clear that this is but one formulation of a more general problem, namely, that of the basis upon which the relationship between God and man is to be established--in other words, this is Ritschl's first, imprecise, formulation of the category of Lebensfuehrung. The changing understanding which Christians had of this basic reality traces the movement from apostolic to Catholic Christianity. There are five phases in this movement, as Ritschl charts it: (a) Jesus' attitude towards the Mosaic law; (b) the attitudes of the

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[1]These criticisms, of course, represent the mature opinions of the second edition of his Entstehung.

[2]Supra, pp. 28-29.

[3]Ritschl, Entstehung, p. 27.

first Christians--Pauline, Jewish and Judaistic; (c) the estrangement of Gentile Christianity from Jewish Christianity, culminating in rapid de-Judaization by 150 A.D. and a new legalism; (d) the catholicism of the antignostic fathers--intensification of Christianity as a new law; (e) the struggle with Montanism--the firmly established episcopate. I shall discuss each of these phases briefly.

(1) Jesus' attitude towards the Mosaic law. Ritschl is of the opinion that Jesus did not solve the problem of what should be the Christian attitude towards the Mosaic law (nor did he intend to), nevertheless, his own attitude can serve as the basis for a more thorough-going Christian attitude. The key to Jesus' own attitude is the distinction between that for which man exists (i.e., man's highest end) and that which exists for man. Insofar as the Mosaic law pertains to the latter, it is adiaphoron for Christians; but to the extent that it pertains to man's highest end, it is binding even for Jesus himself.[1] Man's highest end, according to Jesus, is love to God and to man, with result that this love becomes the principle or essence of all the law. Laws which do not serve this end must be set aside;[2] laws which serve it are in fact laws applying in the kingdom of God.[3] (This could include circumcision and Mosaic worship). Jesus himself did not explicate a new law in detail, because it was not his first purpose to do so; his first task was to establish the kingdom of God on the basis of his own personal worthiness as the Son of Man, and to awaken faith in himself as such.[4] Jesus' attitude towards the Mosaic law is summarized by Ritschl thus:

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[1] Ibid., pp. 31-41 and passim.

[2] Ibid., pp. 45-46.

[3] Ibid., p. 47.

[4] Ibid., p. 46.

> Jesus hat Gesetz und Propheten anerkannt, sofern sie den hoechsten Zweck des Menschen in den Geboten der Liebe zu Gott und zu den Menschen in sich enthalten; er hat sie der in ihnen wirkenden Idee der Gerechtigkeit gemaess dadurch vollendet, dass er in jenen Geboten das Princip des Gesetzes fuer das Gottesreich dargestellt hat; er hat demgemaess fuer das Gottesreich alles ausser Geltung gesetzt, was im mosaischen Gesetze diesen hoechsten Principe nicht entspricht, also nicht nur die Sabbathsruhe, den Opferdienst, die Reinigungen, sondern auch die Gestaltung der Ehescheidung, das jus talionis, die Beschraenkung der Liebespflicht auf die Freunde, das Gebot des Eides. Jedoch hat er weder die Beschneidung und das Privilegium des israelitischen Volkes innerhalb des Gottesreiches abgeschafft, noch seine Juenger, die demselben angehoerten, faktisch von der Beobachtung der mosaischen Kultussitte losgerissen.[1]

I shall have occasion in a later place to note how this attitude of Jesus was incorporated into the norm by which Ritschl evaluates all later attitudes.[2]

(2) The attitudes of the first Christians--Pauline, Jewish and Judaistic. Ritschl contends that the apostolic generation held to the basic lines of Jesus' own thinking in their relation to the Mosaic law. There were tensions and variations among the apostles, but they were relative and not substantial. As they handed down the faith that they had received, they maintained two broad emphases--without which they would have betrayed Christ: the autonomy of Christianity, i.e., they made faith in Christ the only condition of salvation and entrance into the kingdom of God; and the universality of Christianity, i.e., they recognized the right of both Jews and Gentiles to become a part of the kingdom of God.[3] Ritschl insists that none of the original apostles betrayed this basic attitude, and that several of them (not just Paul) developed it dogmatically to some length.[4]

Paul differs from Christ in the form of his dogmatic development, not however in the content of his belief. He separates righteousness into

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[1] Ibid., pp. 46-47.
[2] Infra, p. 102.
[3] Ibid., pp. 47-48.
[4] Ibid., p. 48.

two concepts--righteousness before God and righteousness before man, whereas Christ held them in one concept. He redefines the term righteousness to refer only to the relationship of faith to God. Finally, Paul abrogates the Mosaic law, asserting that love alone directs the new life. But Paul does affirm the close relationship between faith and the resultant ethical response, i.e., between love to God and love to man; and he finds, furthermore, that although love directs the new life, ethical (even Mosaic) injunctions are necessary for the lives of his Christian friends. Ritschl is emphatic in his insistence that Old Testament images and patterns are basic to Paul's preaching, not just because Paul wanted to relate his Gentile converts to the Jewish community, but because the Christian message would have been unintelligible without its Old Testament orientation.[1] I shall indicate below how important this Old Testament orientation is in the totality of Ritschl's argument.[2]

One of Ritschl's sharpest clashes with Baur is to be seen in his evaluation of Jewish Christianity. He denies that it is either monolithic or anti-Pauline. Paul held that Christianity was continuous and in agreement with the divine promise, but in opposition to the Mosaic law.[3] In order for any group to justify the "anti-Pauline" label, there must be direct opposition to this Pauline premise. Some groups did oppose this premise; they held that Christianity was continuous and in agreement with the Mosaic law, and that Christianity's promise depends on the legal status of a man. Such groups are anti-Pauline, not because they are racially or nationally Jewish, but because they hold that Judaism and Christianity are identical. Ritschl calls them "Judaistic Christians" (Judenchristen).[4]

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[1]Ibid., pp. 102-103. [2]Infra,

[3]Ibid., p. 107. [4]Ibid.

The Jewish Christianity which is represented by the epistle of James, the first epistle of Peter, and Revelation is authentically in the line of Jesus' message, but it can be termed neither Pauline or Judaistic. Their conceptions of the relationship between faith and works are not Pauline, but neither are they in opposition to Christ. Each of these authors must be evaluated as an original, thoroughly Christian thinker, whose ideas were not reproduced widely in the second century because they did not lend themselves to the post-apostolic enterprise of dogma.[1] Ritschl summarizes the unity within variation which is found in Paul, James, and Peter, as follows: Paul holds that works are a consequence of faith; James, that works are the concrete stuff of faith; Peter, that they are the test of the utter confidence of faith.[2]

It is significant to note two things in this interpretation which Ritschl gives to apostolic Christianity: first, he has taken great pains, specifically against Baur, to assert the continuity of the apostles with Christ and their unity with one another; and second, the criterion by which he judges this continuity and unity to exist is the category of the Lebensfuehrung which emerges from reconciliation.

For Baur, the decrees of the Council of Jerusalem represent a compromise between warring factions, whose consequence is an authoritative recognition of a "double gospel" for Jews and Gentiles. Ritschl sees things quite differently. The Jerusalem decrees are primarily sociological in nature rather than religious. They are portions of the Jewish proselyte law, the observance of which by Gentiles would make social intercourse

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[1] Ibid., p. 116. [2] Ibid., p. 119.

possible between Jewish and Gentile Christians.[1] It may be true that Judenchristen turned this decree to their own discriminatory purposes, but the party of Peter and James considered it in no wise a condition for salvation or entrance into the kingdom of God. Therefore, this decree cannot be subsumed under the rubric of anti-Paulinism. Paul did later break with the decrees, because he considered even sociological distinctions to be a violation of the spirit of eucharistic fellowship.[2] Ritschl believes that Peter and James ultimately joined with Paul in rejecting the decree after the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem.[3] Ritschl summarizes the conflict between Paul and the other apostles as one which concerned the division and relationship of the Jewish mission to the Gentile mission. Paul differentiated them along geographical lines; James, along ethnographical.[4]

In the post-apostolic period, Ritschl classifies the Nazarites and the epistle to the Hebrews as representing the Jewish Christian position of the early apostles; the community represented by the pseudo-Clementine literature whom he terms Christianized Essenes he classifies as Jewish Christians who represent the position of Peter at Antioch.[5] As Judenchristen, Ritschl includes another group of Essene Ebionites, namely the Syrian Elkesaites, whom he terms "pharisaic Ebionites" to distinguish them from the Ebionites of Epiphanius.[6] It is clear from this that he ascribes much more diversity to Jewish Christianity than does Baur, and he considers the Ebionites to be much less a force in second century Christianity.

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[1] Ibid., pp. 130ff.

[2] Ibid., pp. 146-47.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., p. 152.

[5] These include Ebionites of Epiphanius and the Elkesaites, ibid., pp. 204-205.

[6] Ibid., pp. 154-55 and 248.

(3) The estrangement of Gentile Christianity from Jewish Christianity, culminating in rapid de-Judaization by 150 A.D. A combination of internal and external forces brought about the reaction against Jewish Christianity which lays the foundation of Ritschl's claim that the old catholic church is a product of Gentile Christianity. These forces account for the shift from the subapostolic unity of Gentile and Jewish Christians to the late second century statement of Irenaeus, that Jewish Christianity is confined to "Ebionite sects, outside the church."[1] The responsibility for this shift, says Ritschl, lies chiefly with the Jewish Christians, because they placed inordinate demands upon the Gentile Christians. The Judenchristen demanded that the Gentiles submit to the whole Mosaic law, as proselytes; the Clementine-Essene-Ebionites insisted, more moderately, only on certain purificatory rites; the Jerusalem apostles and Nazarenes insisted on invoking the four decrees of the proselyte law, for reasons of social contacts.[2] Justin Martyr's attitude stands as a testimony that Jewish-Gentile Christian intercourse had not broken down completely.[3] But the Jews' demands, coupled with a second century cultural and political situation that demanded increasing uniformity in practice, brought conditions to the point where even moderate Jewish Christian demands had to be rejected.[4] Ritschl considers the events surrounding the rise of Bar Kochba--his persecution of Jewish Christians, Hadrian's establishment of the Aelia Capitolina, the prohibition of circumcision, and the installation of a Gentile bishop in Jerusalem--to be decisive external factors in the de-Judaization of Christianity, even more than Titus' destruction of the

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[1] Ibid., p. 248.

[2] Ibid., pp. 250-52.

[3] Ibid., p. 255.

[4] Ibid., pp. 256-57.

temple.[1] The significance of this de-Judaization in Ritschl's interpretation of early Christianity is considerable; for it means that the church was forced to consider as heretical a position which the apostles themselves had held, and it means that the Old Testament presuppositions, without which apostolic Christianity is unintelligible, were gradually fading from the church's understanding.[2] The consequence is what Ritschl terms "das christliche Gesetztum der apostolischen Vaeter."[3]

The elaboration of this interpretation entails the rejection of the notion that early second century Gentile Christianity was exclusively Pauline. Paulinism, Ritschl claims, never assumed confessional status in Gentile Christianity, and it was in fact of subordinate importance in several areas.[4] In fact, the apostolic fathers, although they held to a notion of catholicism which was a sort of "average" of apostolic teaching, distorted both the Pauline and Petrine teaching rather decisively. Their failure to grasp the genuine Old Testament basis of the Christian message led them to distort the concept of sacrifice, the relationship of faith to ethics, and the entire understanding of how God and man are related.[5] Thus, for example, Clement of Rome and Polycarp cannot distinguish between faith and works;[6] and Justin Martyr totally misunderstands Christianity's relation to the Mosaic law when he proclaims Christ as a new lawgiver and Christianity as

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[1] Ibid., pp. 258-59. [2] Ibid., pp. 257, 281-82.

[3] Ibid., p. 274. This is a chapter title, see pp. 274-98. It does not appear in the first edition.

[4] Ibid., pp. 271-72. [5] Ibid., pp. 280-84.

[6] Ibid., pp. 283-84, 287-88.

a new law.[1] Because he did not have access to the Old Testament background, Justin fails to distinguish between the "von Gott gesetztes Verhaeltnis" and the "auf Gott bezogenen Verhalten."[2] This leads to a basic distortion of the notion of revelation as a new lawgiving. This assessment, Ritschl believes, not only demonstrates the distortion of the rising Catholic theology, but also reveals that the new legalism (contra Baur) is neither Pauline, Ebionite, nor Judenchristlich.[3]

(4) The Catholicism of the antignostic fathers--intensification of Christianity as a new law. Ritschl holds that Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen are the first genuinely catholic theologians. His interpretation of them is characterized by the notion that they intensify the trend of the apostolic fathers. The development of the regula fidei and the episcopal constitution in their struggle against Gnosticism is important, but for the purposes of Ritschl's investigation here, it is much more important to note the culmination of their efforts against Judenchristentum in the legalistic conception of the relation between God and man. This represents their deviation from apostolic ways of believing. This really is the only aspect of their theology that Ritschl pays attention to. This accords with our thesis that Ritschl narrows his interest to the historical continuity and discontinuity that can be established on the basis of his category of Lebensfuehrung. He writes,

> Es ist allgemein zugestanden, dass Irenaeus, Tertullian, und die Alexandriner Clemens und Origenes Repraesentanten der altkatholischen Kirche sind. Man ist aber gewohnt, als Merkmale ihrer Richtung nur das Bekenntniss zu der apostolischen Glaubensregel, d.h. ihren Gegensatz

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[1] Ibid., pp. 298-301. Note how Ritschl applies his category of Lebensfuehrung and reconciliation to establish a discontinuity between these figures and the teaching of Christ and the apostles.

[2] Ibid., p. 304.

[3] Ibid., pp. 310-11.

> gegen die haeretische Gnosis, und die Anerkennung der bischoeflichen Verfassung hervorzuheben. Hoechstens wird darauf aufmerksam gemacht, dass ein unapostolisches Streben nach Werkheiligkeit bei diesen Kirchenlehrern sich geltend mache; jedoch ohne dass der Zusammenhang dieses Elementes ihrer Anschauung naeher erklaert wuerde. Allerdings ist nun die Glaubensregel ein wesentliches Glied des katholisch-kirchlichen Standpunktes jener Kirchenlehrer. Das andere ist aber eben die Gesetzliche Auffassung des religioesen Verhaeltnisses des Christen zu Gott. Und wie die Glaubensregel den Gegensatz gegen die haeretische Gnosis ausdrueckt, so bezeichnet die Auffassung des Christentums unter dem Haupttitel des neuen Gesetzes zugleich den Gegensatz gegen das Judenchristentum und die Abweichung von den apostolischen Anschauungsformen.[1]

At this point, Ritschl can draw tentative conclusions concerning the old Catholic church: It has lost the ability to assess properly the status of form in worship and law, chiefly because it has lost the proper criteria for assessing the Old Testament forms. It takes them literally rather than as the "ideale Selbstgefuehl des christlichen Glaubens."[2] This in turn reveals a deep misunderstanding of the relation between faith and works, a loss of the Pauline understanding of justification by faith--[3]and, one might add, a loss of continuity in understanding the fundamental Christian Lebensfuehrung which stems from Christ himself, and which is the Ritschlian criterion par excellence. The Montanist and Novatian schisms arose out of the attempt by these groups to restore the proper equilibrium between faith and works, the religious and the ethical.[4] This leads Ritschl directly to a discussion of Montanism, which in his mind directs the church's development away from belief or dogma to practice and church constitution (Verfassung).

(5) The struggle with Montanism--the firmly established episcopate. The importance for Ritschl of Montanism and its impact on early church constitution is indicated by the fact that he devotes nearly two hundred fifty of the Entstehung's six hundred pages to it. His discussion is essentially

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[1]Ibid., p. 312.(Italics mine.) [2]Ibid., p. 332.

[3]Ibid., p. 333. [4]Ibid., p. 336.

a study of the career of the episcopal office as it moves from apostolic congregational office through Montanism to catholic ecclesiastical order. This is a movement towards a Catholic office in which the episcopacy bears the two indispensable marks of public-liturgical distinction (gottesdienstlich), centering in the bishop's representative and mediatorial functions, and priestly designation; only when these two marks are found together can the catholic conception of the episcopacy be said to be at work.[1] The apostolic office of bishop contrasts sharply with the Catholic. It is chiefly a political office of the local congregation, for the supervision of good works;[2] it is a charismatic office;[3] the bishop mediates nothing, but rather performs his duties in behalf of the entire congregation--even after he assumes the discharge of liturgical and disciplinary matters.[4] Ritschl's discussion of this apostolic office is oriented towards demonstrating that whatever it is, it is not the catholic office of the mid-third century. He keeps his eyes on that which the episcopacy was to become. For example, in one of his early summaries, he writes

> In der aeltesten Gestalt der Gemeindedisciplin, und in ihrer urspruenglichen Auffassung liegt also nichts vor, was auf die Anerkennung eines specifischen gottesdienstlichen oder priesterlichen Charakters der Gemeindebeamten im Unterschiede von der Gemeinde hinwiese.[5]

The gradual shift towards the public-liturgical and priestly emphases accompanied the rise of legalism and the loss of understanding of the notion of justification by faith.[6] This shift manifested itself in the growing understanding of the laying on of hands in forgiveness, in baptism, and in ordination as actually transmitting grace as an act of the bishop rather

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[1] Ibid., p. 555.
[2] Ibid., p. 353.
[3] Ibid., pp. 362-63.
[4] Ibid., pp. 366-75.
[5] Ibid., pp. 383-84. (Italics mine.)
[6] Ibid., p. 399.

than of the congregation,[1] as well as in the notion that prayers and fasting could be meritorious in securing forgiveness.[2]

The emergence of the monarchical episcopate at the beginning of the second century in Antioch, Smyrna, and Ephesus--for which Ignatius is our earliest witness--does not yet represent a Catholic episcopal conception, but it is an important phase in the movement towards catholicity.[3] At this point, the subjection to the bishop is still understood as an ethical responsibility which is laid upon the congregation in the interests of good order.[4] Later, it becomes a religious, liturgical matter.[5] The emergence of the monarchical episcopate in the Gentile church is to be distinguished from that in the Jewish church, however; Ritschl goes so far as to say that these two developments constitute two different episcopates.[6] The Jewish Christian development is found only in Jerusalem (with some influence in Alexandria), where a strong bishop system evolved early, the bishop representing Christ, surrounded by twelve presbyters who corresponded to the apostolate.[7] The Gentile development was slower, partly because the episcopate had to win its superiority over a presbyterate which was originally equal to it; and when it did emerge preeminent, it was as the successor to the apostles.[8] The Jerusalem bishop immediately assumed the status of ecclesiastical authority extending over his province; his Gentile counterpart began only as a congregational office (Lokalamt), who later assumed

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[1] Ibid., pp. 384-86.
[2] Ibid., p. 381.
[3] Ibid., pp. 407-10.
[4] Ibid., p. 407.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid., p. 418.
[7] Ibid., pp. 416-19.
[8] Ibid., pp. 419ff.

wider authority[1] (Kirchenamt). Ritschl believes that both the Pseudo-Clementine and the Pseudo-Ignatian literature sought to implement the Jewish-Christian episcopate, the former in Jewish-Christian, the latter in Gentile-Christian circles; but both were ahead of their times, expressing views that were by no means universally held.[2]

The thrust of Montanism itself is best summed up (as Ritschl interprets it) as a reactionary force in doctrine, morals, and discipline, which sought a return to more primitive beliefs and practices in the face of what it considered to be a widespread relaxing of standards and accommodation to the world.[3] The immediate point of controversy concerned the "second penance" for the lapsi. Ritschl asserts that both the Roman decree in this matter and its Montanist opposition constitute innovations from apostolic Christianity. Traditionally, penance and forgiveness had been matters over which the congregation alone had authority; now, the catholics make them matters of ecclesiastical office by granting the power of the keys to the bishop, whereas the Montanists (e.g., Tertullian) want to make them charismatic matters by granting this power to the so-called "new prophets."[4] Here the real nub of Montanist reaction is revealed as opposition to the burgeoning episcopate, coupled with an uncompromising schismatic temperament.[5]

The consequence of the Montanist opposition and its defeat is the firm establishment of the Catholic episcopate, as set forth in the opinions of Cyprian of Carthage and in the policies elaborated in the Apostolic

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[1] Ibid., p. 436.

[2] Ibid., pp. 460-61.

[3] Ibid., p. 518.

[4] Ibid., pp. 518-21.

[5] Ibid., pp. 519-20.

Constitutions. The bishop becomes priest, enacting a sacrifice which amounts to a representation of Christ's sacrifice, and thus the bishop attains a unique public-liturgical status.[1] The episcopacy becomes the organizing principle of the church, highpriest and judge, as well as preserver of the regula fidei, prophet, and mediator of divine grace.[2]

To summarize, Ritschl seeks by means of an historical investigation, to answer the question of how third century (Catholic) Christianity could emerge from first century (apostolic) Christianity. The answer which he comes to is this: because of its alienation from its Hebraic roots, Gentile Christianity reacted to the social and political pressures of the first and second centuries in such a way as to deviate both in belief and practice from the broad apostolic understanding of the God-man relationship. This deviate reaction did in fact constitute the old Catholic church. A Gentile deviation in understanding the basis of man's relationship to God--that is Ritschl's formal assessment of the old Catholic church. His material assessment could be phrased as a Roman-oriented episcopate which has perversely subordinated the religious to the moral in a new legalism.[3]

The point that cannot be emphasized enough is that Ritschl's preoccupation in this study of early Christianity has been with historical continuity and discontinuity, discussed and evaluated in terms of the Lebensfuehrung which emerges from reconciliation, i.e., from a properly realized God-man relationship. His study of early Christianity has achieved certain things by way of pursuing this preoccupation:

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[1] Ibid., pp. 555f. [2] Ibid., pp. 570ff.

[3] It is instructive to compare this with Baur's assessment of the same phenomena: formally, a natural stage of a necessary religious development, synthesizing antithetical factors; materially, the spiritual self-consciousness of the Christian church, which by synthesizing Jewish form with Pauline content, expressed its essential nature in the unity of the episcopate.

(a) He has given emphatic, though imprecise, status to the category of Lebensfuehrung. He has used it at every step of the way in his interpretation of early Christianity. He has shown that it concerns the basic God-man relationship of reconciliation, which is constituted by a certain equilibrium of divine and human factors. This reconciliation has to do with the understanding man has of his own life and its total commitment; at its best, it is committed to God's grace for its justification; at its worst, it is committed to man's own literal legalistic works. In the next chapter, I shall indicate how Ritschl gained clarity in his formulation of this category as he gained in maturity, and how he associates it intimately with Reformation Christianity.

(b) He has not only demonstrated how thorough-going his preoccupation with historical continuity is, but he has also taken one great step towards fulfilling the responsibility which he believes to have devolved upon him as a result of his participation in the reality of that continuity as imperative. That step is the demonstration of the continuity and unity of Lebensfuehrung that existed among Jesus and his apostles, as well as the discontinuity between this apostolic community and the emerging Catholic church of the second and third centuries. In the demonstration of this continuity and discontinuity, Ritschl has revealed two principles at work, which correspond to his dual commitment as an historian.[1] He has employed a principle of openness to history and the contents of the historical continuum, and he has also employed a principle of selectivity or axiology. The former is commensurate with his commitment to the physical continuity of the historical continuum. This principle of openness has forced Ritschl to reject the notion of a double gospel, as well as the notion that

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[1] Supra, pp. 36-37.

Catholicism is the product of a compromise of conflicting antitheses--because both of these Baurian notions entail lacunae which Ritschl believes disrupt the physical continuity of the historical continuum. It has forced Ritschl to conclude that Catholicism is a Gentile Christian phenomenon. The principle of selectivity or axiology corresponds to Ritschl's commitment to Reformation Christianity. This principle has brought Ritschl to assess Catholicism as a deviation from apostolic Christianity. The practical application of this principle modifies (one could even say, violates) the principle of openness to history in two ways: it has narrowed the focus of the attention which Ritschl directs to the historical continuum, and it brings Ritschl to some rather brutal and injudicious judgments of the historical data.

(c) In this discussion of early Christianity, Ritschl has provided the student an opportunity to see how closely constructive and historical factors are interrelated in his theological work. There is no question that constructive factors are at work in this historical investigation of early Christianity, even if they tend to be imprecisely articulated, more implicit than explicit. These constructive factors account for the notion of Lebensfuehrung as a category of selectivity and as a category which gives purpose and direction to the historical investigation. But there is no attempt to work with this constructive category except in the context of historical materials. The constructive point which Ritschl wants to make is a point about history and its implications for the theologian's task. This dissertation will attempt to show how this is true in all of Ritschl's theological work, even in the work which is explicitly more constructive than the Entstehung.

Having accomplished this much, it remains for Ritschl to delineate the career of the Lebensfuehrung which he has come upon in early Christianity, clarify it, and relate it to Reformation Christianity. This phase of his work is taken up in the next chapter.

CHAPTER II

THE PROBLEM OF CONTINUITY IN THE MOVEMENT FROM CATHOLICISM, THROUGH THE REFORMATION AND LUTHERANISM, TO RITSCHL

The preceding chapter traced the preoccupation of the young Albrecht Ritschl with the problem of historical continuity. It documented the manner in which the young man, between his twenty-eighth and thirty-fifth years, prosecuted this concern with continuity in the context of an historical investigation of early Christianity, beginning with the Baurian framework, retaining its Fragestellung, but rejecting its answer to the question of how Catholic Christianity emerged from apostolic Christianity. In this discussion particular attention was drawn to the category of Lebensfuehrung, which Ritschl formulated to locate and designate this continuity; notice was also taken that the delineation and the defense of this continuity, in terms of this category, was deeply rooted in Ritschl's conception of his vocation as a Protestant theologian.

This chapter deals with the mature Ritschl, even interpreting material which he sent to the printer in his fifty-eighth year (he lived to the age of sixty-six). Between 1870 and 1880, Ritschl's output of materials dealing with the problem of historical continuity amounted to at least three thousand pages.[1] In this massive output, he moved all the way

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[1]He continued to revise these historical works up to the year of his death. A revised edition of R.u.V. I appeared in 1882. The third revised edition of R.u.V. II appeared in 1889, the year of Ritschl's death.

from an interpretation of the biblical witness (in R.u.V. II) through the Medieval period, the Reformation, Pietism, and up to the Hegelian currents of his own day.

I shall not deal with all of this material in detail. Only Ritschl's interpretation of the Reformation merits attention here, with some summary attention to its relationship to Medieval and Pietist Christianity. The contention in this chapter is that this later work elaborates upon the main lines of theological development which were noted in Ritschl's early work and brings these lines of development into sharper focus, while giving them more precise expression.

The argument of this chapter should make it clear that Ritschl's preoccupation with historical continuity did not lessen in his mature years, but, if anything, became intensified. Ritschl's interest in the historical materials from Anselm to Hegel centers on only one thing, the delineation of their continuity or discontinuity, according to the criterion which he has formulated. This criterion continues to be the category of the Lebensfuehrung which emerges from man's relationship of reconciliation with God, which in turn presupposes a certain equilibrium between divine and human factors within this relationship. As before, Ritschl's historical investigations amount to an elaboration of the Christian community's ongoing understanding of this relationship of reconciliation. It is clear, however, that Ritschl attained greater clarity in the understanding and articulation of this category as he grew older. In the Entstehung, this category appeared to exert only an implicit force in his analysis; in this chapter, we shall note how explicit the force of this category became in his thought.

The one difference to be noted in this later work is the different question with which Ritschl approached the historical materials at hand.

When he approached early Christianity, he asked, "How did the apostolic community become the Catholic church? In this later work he asks, "How did the Reformation emerge from Medieval Catholicism?" and "How did the Reformation become the Lutheran church?" Despite their differences, these questions are dearly parallel. Their very phrasing indicates that Ritschl is still operating within the Baurian Fragestellung which emphasized movement or continuity as the initial problem for consideration.

The sources for the argument of this chapter include the following: the first volume of Die christliche Lehre von der Rechtfertigung und der Versoehnung[1] (1870, 1882, 1889) whose subtitle is: "Die Geschichte der Lehre"; the essays, "Die Entstehung der lutherischen Kirche" (1876), "Ein Nachtrag zur Entstehung der lutherischen Kirche" (1878), "Ueber die beiden Principien des Protestantismus" (1876); and Geschichte des Pietismus[2] (1880-86), specifically, the "Prolegomena" as found in volume one.

Ritschl's historical analysis and interpretation of Medieval Christianity can be summarized as the attempt to demonstrate that an adequate understanding of reconciliation (which was taken up by the reformers) did persist in the church, even though this period generally reinforced the perversion which he had noted in the old Catholic church. The following quotations bring this out very clearly. They also reveal just how emphatically Ritschl uses the category of Lebensfuehrung as an axiological criterion for the interpretation of history. In these passages, he discusses

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[1]All citations are from the first edition (Bonn: Adolph Marcus, 1870) unless otherwise noted. Hereafter cited as R.u.V. I.

[2]Ritschl, Geschichte des Pietismus (3 vols.; Bonn: Adolph Marcus, 1880-1886). Hereafter cited as Pietismus.

the divine and human factors in the God-man relationshp under the notions of justification and sanctification.

> Man wird sich hingegen vergeblich bemuehen, den reformatorischen Lehrbegriff von der iustificatio, naemlich die absichtliche Unterscheidung zwischen iustificatio und regeneratio, bei irgend einem Theologen des Mittelalters nachzuweisen.[1]...Ungeachtet dessen hat der leitende Gedanke der Reformatoren von den Bedingungen der Rechtfertigung eine breite Basis in der Kirche. Er findet charakteristische Vorklaenge in ausgesprochenen und zwar absichtlich betonten Gedankenreihen mittelaltriger Maenner, und zwar solcher, welche als Theologen ebenso absichtlich und unzweideutig sich zu der katholischen Justificationslehre bekennen. Denn es handelt sich bei dem Gedanken der Rechtfertigung fuer die Reformatoren in erster Linie gar nicht um eine objective Lehre des theologischen Systems, sondern um den obersten Massstab der religioesen Selbstbeurtheilung des Subjects, welches in der christlichen Kirche steht, und dieser Bestimmung gemaess in guten Werken aus dem heiligen Geiste thaetig ist. Und zwar handelt es sich fuer die Reformatoren darum, dass der Wiedergeborene nicht durch die guten Werke, welche er wirklich leistet, seine Geltung vor Gott und die Gewissheit seines Heiles besitze, sondern durch die Gnade Gottes, welche seinem glaeubigen Vertrauen die Rechtfertigung durch Christus verbuergt. Diese Behauptung, welche ihren Beweis im folgenden Capitel finden wird, muss ich hier vorweg aufstellen, um an diesem Kriterium solche Aeusserungen mittelaltriger Froemmigkeit zu messen, welche mit Recht als Analogieen des religioesen Standpunktes der Reformatoren angesehen werden, und in demselben Masse ueber die Grenzen der katholischen Lehre von der iustificatio und der mit ihr verflochtenen Lehre vom meritum hinausgreifen.[2]...Wo nun im Mittelalter die ausgesprochene Andacht sich zu der Gedankenreihe erhebt, dass der Werth des christlichen Lebens, auch wenn es in guten Werken fruchtbar ist, nicht in diesen als menschlichen Verdiensten, sondern in der Barmherzigkeit Gottes begruendet ist, da doch sie erst diese Werke moeglich macht, und zugleich die Schuld der fortlaufenden Suenden aufwiegen muss,--wo diese eigenthuemliche Gewissheit der goettlichen Gnade im Gebiete der christlichen Gemeinde vergegenwaertigt wird als der Anspruch der Glaeubigen, welcher alle denkbaren und wirlich vorausgesetzten Gnadenmittel ueberspringt, da wird die Linie eingenommen, auf welcher das religioese Bewusstsein unserer Reformatoren die Kraft gehabt hat, den bis auf sie bestehenden Zusammenhang katholischer Lehre und kirchlicher Institutionen zu durchbrechen. Allerdings gehoeren zu dieser Wirkung noch andere Bedingungen als die Grundansicht von der Gnade....Allein indem die religioese Selbstbeurtheilung, welche den Werth des theoretisch anerkannten Verdienstes praktisch verneint, bei Heroen der mittelaltrigen Kirche so stark ausgepraegt ist, so dient dieses zum Beweise dafuer, dass der leitende Gesichtpunkt unserer Reformation in der lateinische Kirche von jeher heimisch gewesen ist. Der Gebrauch der allem Andern uebergeordneten Idee der goettlichen Gnade, welchen die Reformatoren gemacht haben, ist auch nur eine folgerechte Anwendung derselben.[3]

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[1] R.u.V. I, 93.

[2] Ibid., pp. 94-95.

[3] Ibid., pp. 96-97.(Italics mine.)

These quotations not only reveal Ritschl's rigorous use of the category of Lebensfuehrung (as it emerges from reconciliation) as a criterion for interpreting history; they also illumine the force which the preoccupation with historical continuity exerts in his work. That is to say, Ritschl's historical investigation of Medieval Christianity is undertaken in order to document the historical continuity of a notion of reconciliation which finds its clearest expression in Reformation Christianity and in Ritschl's own formulations. This continuity is important for Ritschl because (if he is to fulfill his vocation as theologian) this notion of reconciliation must be ultimately rooted in apostolic Christianity, and its opposition to ancient and Medieval Catholicism must be demonstrated. The scientific demonstration of such continuity and discontinuity is impossible unless a fundamental, physical unity is posited as inherent in the historical continuum.[1] This work of Ritschl's, then, as the earlier work discussed above, grows out of his participation in historical continuity as imperative.

Our assignment at this point is to discuss Ritschl's interpretation of the Reformation and Reformation Christianity. As we illumine the two basic aspects of the Reformation on which Ritschl focusses his attention--its emergence from Medieval Christianity and its development into the Lutheran church--it will become clear not only that Ritschl is preoccupied with historical continuity, but that he insists on elaborating his own constructive position within the context of the exposition and polemic which is entailed in his participation in that historical continuity.[2]

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[1] Supra, p. 38.

[2] For the significance of this elaboration, see infra, pp. 119-120.

As we observe this analysis of Reformation Christianity, we should note the methodological scheme which Ritschl followed in his interpretation of early Christianity and which follows as he compares the Reformation to Medieval Christianity and to the Lutheran church. The first step in this method is the establishment of the unity which exists as a simple physical factor within the historical continuum.[1] This physical continuity is necessary if historical investigation is to proceed along scientific lines. Ritschl goes to great length to establish this continuity between Catholicism and apostolic Christianity, between the Reformation and the Medieval church, and between Lutheranism and the Reformation. But in each case this exercise constitutes only a propadeutic to the work that Ritschl really wants to perform, namely the evaluation of each of the historical phenomena in question in the light of a certain category of Lebensfuehrung which emerges from the God-man relation of reconciliation. In each case, this evaluation brings to light the theological continuities and discontinuities which hold ultimate significance for Ritschl. These continuities and discontinuities inform the chief purpose of Ritschl's work. This is another phase of the thesis which this dissertation seeks to establish, that Ritschl's theological work is shaped by a preoccupation with historical continuity (and its obverse, historical discontinuity).

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[1]See note one, previous page.

How Reformation Christianity Emerged From Medieval Christianity

The long passages quoted above[1] indicate that Ritschl believes that the Reformation understanding of reconciliation is rooted in the best Medieval tradition of piety, which in turn can be traced back to the apostolic community. By insisting on this unity with the best of the traditional Christian piety, Ritschl is attempting to establish nothing less than the Catholicity of the reformers.

This Catholicity seems to be constituted by historical continuity. Here is another link in the chain of the argument that historical continuity is Ritschl's chief theological preoccupation. In a revealing section of R.u.V. I, Ritschl lays down the maxim that no figure in the history of Christianity can be interpreted as if his own personal religious and scholarly experiences formed the sufficient basis for his theological position.[2] Particularly in the interpretation of the reformers, care must be taken to place each figure in the larger context of theological and ecclesiastical movements. One must adhere to the view that "in dem Wechsel und Fortschritte der theologischen Erkenntnis die logisch nothwendige Selbstbewegung des Gedankens nachzuweisen sei."[3] On the basis of this method, it is inadmissible to interpret the reformers--i.e., Luther, Zwingli, Melanchthon, and Calvin--as rebels who were on principle opposed to the "geschichtlich gewordene katholische Kirche."[4] This is rather the characteristic of the Anabaptists, the heretics, and the sectarians.[5] Nor is it admissible to

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[1] Supra, p. 61.

[2] Ritschl, R.u.V. I, 129.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., p. 130.

[5] Ibid.

interpret the reformers as the founders of a new religion or as prophets who reached a perfection of knowledge and inspiration which heretofore had never been attained.[1] Again, these are characteristics only of the sectarians.[2] Rather, the interpreter must understand the grounds for the assertion that the reformers were more authentically Catholic than the Roman church, while at the same time unalterably opposed to the sectarians. Ritschl himself phrases the matter thus,

> An welchen geschichtlichen Umstaenden wird es also zu erkennen sein, dass unsere Reformatoren als solche den Boden der Kirche behauptet, dass sie denselben weder mit der Secte noch mit dem der Schule vertauscht haben? Welches ist der Massstab dafuer, dass sie in der Lossagung von der roemischen Gestalt der Kirche nicht zugleich die Trennung von der Katholicitaet der Kirche vollzogen? Die Beantwortung dieser Fragen wird nicht schon erschoepft sein durch Hinweisung auf die Absicht der Reformatoren, den Gedanken der universellen Kirche in Geltung zu erhalten. Denn an dieser Absicht nehmen auch die Wiedertaeufer und die Socinianer in ihrer Art Theil; und doch laufen die Merkmale, auf welche diese Parteien jede nach ihrer Art den Begriff von der Kirche zurueckfuehren, der bisher geltenden oder indirect vorausgesetzten Lehre durchaus zuwider. Es kommt also darauf an, ob die Reformatoren auch gemaess einem hergebrachten und auch fuer ihre Gegner nicht durchaus verwerflichen Grundsatze den Boden der allgemeinen Kirche behauptet haben, auch nachdem die roemische Kirchengewalt sie als Haeretiker verstossen hatte.[3]

As he approaches the Reformation, Ritschl also approaches the theological position which he himself espouses. The passage just cited makes clear a point that is crucial for this dissertation: namely, that Ritschl is not simply interested in systematically elaborating his theological position, nor in demonstrating its existential or logical superiority over other positions. Rather, his interest here seems to be to demonstrate its Catholicity, i.e., its historical continuity with the best of traditional Christian piety, back to apostolic times, including the teaching of Jesus Christ

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[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

himself. This clarifies in an important way what it means for Ritschl to be preoccupied with historical continuity, even to the extent that that preoccupation shapes his theological achievement. This also clarifies the statement in the previous chapter that "the constructive point which Ritschl wants to make is a point about history and its implications for the theologian's task."[1]

Ritschl adduces several specific arguments in behalf of his assertion that Reformation Christianity is authentically Catholic. The first, and perhaps the most massive, of these arguments centers in Ritschl's assertion that the reformers were neither mere appropriators of the traditional thought of reconciliation nor rebels who sought an open break with the church's tradition. Rather, the reformers mark a new stage in the church's development, and as such they introduce elements which are legitimate expressions of the Catholic tradition, but which are nevertheless new.[2] The task of the reformers--and that which gave their work a genuinely reforming turn--was to assert the claims of this new stage of development in such a way as to overwhelm and eliminate those institutions and forms which treatened to obstruct its expression.[3] So, Ritschl writes,

> Insofern ist die Reformation ein specifischer Punkt der Entwickelung der Kirche, und, da die Kirche durch die herrschenden Auctoritaeten grossentheils gehindert wurde, diese Entwickelung mitzumachen, ein Bruch mit der bisherigen Entwickelungs stufe der Kirche.[4]

The Anabaptists and Socinians broke with the historical church in principle. In his attempt to distinguish their break from the reforming work

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[1] Supra, p. 56.

[2] Ritschl, R.u.V. I, 171-72.

[3] Ibid., p. 172.

[4] Ibid.

of Luther, Ritschl enunciates once again his understanding of historical tradition and continuity with it:

> Um also das kirchliche Werk Luther's und Zwingli's von diesen Gestalten radicaler, revolutionaerer Reform qualitativ zu unterscheiden, glaube ich behaupten zu duerfen, dass Zwingli wie Luther ihre reformatorischen Grundgedanken weder erfunden, noch durch blosse Schriftauslegung erst neu entdeckt, sondern sie aus innerkirchlicher Ueberlieferung empfangen haben, und dass zugleich die reformatorische Verwendung des allein an der Gnade und an Christus normirten religioesen Bewusstseins zur Beseitigung der widersprechenden Institutionen und Schultraditionen die Linie des kirchlichen Charakters innehaelt, weil sie in Wechselwirkung mit dem urspruenglichen und richtigen Gedanken von der Kirche, als der Gemeinde der von Gott Geheiligten steht.[1]

The first argument, then, upon which Ritschl bases his claim that the Reformation Christianity is Catholic is the assertion that it represents a new, but nevertheless legitimate stage in the development of the church.

A second major argument which sustains the reformers' claim to be authentically Catholic centers in the fact that they professed the desire to remain within the limits of the Christian fellowship of the Holy Roman Empire. This not only sets them apart from those left-wing groups who withdrew from this fellowship; it also sets them apart from those who denied the doctrine of the Trinity and the ecumenical creeds of the ancient church.[2] Ritschl emphasizes this adherence to ancient dogma in the following manner,

> Allerdings sprechen die Reformatoren selbst kaum jemals ein klares politisches Bewusstsein darueber aus, dass sie sich durch die Anerkennung der Trinitaetslehre auf dem gesetzlichen Boden des roemischen Reiches behaupten. Es war ihnen nur bewusst, dass sie durch dieses Bekenntnis auf dem Grunde der katholischen Kirche standen. Ohne allen Zweifel galt auch jene Lehre fuer die Reformatoren urspruenglich in Kraft der kirchlichen Ueberlieferung und nicht der specifischen Auctoritaet der heiligen Schrift....Allein die Meinung liegt doch in derjenigen Richtung, in welcher spaeter Georg Calixtus den dogmatischen Consensus der fuenf ersten christlichen Jahrhunderte als Maassstab der Auslegung der heiligen Schrift behauptete. Thatsache ist also, dass die Reformatoren in der Lehre von Christi Person und von der Trinitaet in erster Linie diesen Consensus befolgt haben, indem sie ihren Fuss auf dem Boden der katholischen Kirche des roemischen Reiches behielten.[3]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 172-73.

[2] Ibid., pp. 134-36.

[3] Ibid., pp. 135-36, (Italics mine).

This adherence to the Catholic tradition of dogma makes it clear, in Ritschl's mind, that the intention of the reformers was to re-introduce the church's original understanding of reconciliation, and thus they knew themselves to be acting in the spirit of the Catholic church.[1]

Finally, and this sets them off from the left-wing of the Reformation as much as it places them within the Catholic tradition, the reformers asserted the "priority of the church over every sign of redemption which manifested itself in individual persons."[2] This they held in practice, not just in theory, as is attested to by the fact that they laid down as the practical criterion of regeneration the notion of reconciliation which had been alive from apostolic times down through the best of Medieval tradition.[3] Ritschl is confident that even if the public doctrine of the medieval church opposed the reformers, the "geuebte, praktische Selbstbeurtheilung des Glaeubigen" accorded with their notion of reconciliation and the God-man relationship.[4] (I.e., his confidence rests on the unity of Lebensfuehrung).

If these be the grounds for asserting the fundamental unity and continuity between Reformation Christianity and the traditional Christianity of the ancient and Medieval periods--i.e., the grounds for the assertion that the reformers were Catholic--, the question next arises concerning the content of this Reformation Christianity, the content of this legitimate, yet distinctively new stage of the church's development.

Ritschl interprets the Reformation as being concerned chiefly with the reality of the sinner's reconciliation with God. As he elaborates this concern, he is also filling out his own understanding of reconciliation

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[1] Ibid., p. 138.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., p. 120. See also p. 97.

and the Lebensfuehrung which emerges from it, the category which I have shown to be so decisive in his historical and theological work. Up to this point I have not discussed the actual content of this Lebensfuehrung. Ritschl's own discussion of the heart of Reformation Christianity gives us the opportunity to analyze in more detail the central category of Ritschl's own theology.

According to Ritschl, the heart of the Reformation emphasis is its insistence that the religious self-consciousness be oriented upon the reconciling, justifying work of Jesus Christ.[1] He writes, with specific reference to Luther and Zwingli:

> Die Gewissheit der Rechtfertigung durch Christus im Glauben, wie sie der in der Kirche stehende und nach Gottes Willen strebende Glaeubige ergreift, ist nun der beiden Maennern gemeinsame Hebel der Reformation der Kirche deshalb, weil die Reformatoren mit jenem subjectiven Heilsbewusstsein die Grundanschauung von der Kirche als der Gemeinschaft der Glaeubigen, der durch Gott geheiligten verbanden. . . .[2]

As the believer enters into the God-man relationship, he recognizes that he does so only on the basis of God's grace in Christ, and not at all on the basis of his own efforts. For this reason Ritschl can assert that it is not really any specific doctrine of justification which stands at the center of Luther's theology, but rather, "Luther's theologisches Princip ist vielmehr der Gedanke der offenbaren Gegenwart der Liebe als des goettlichen Wesens in Christus."[3]

Although he criticizes the reformers for neglecting its proper systematic elaboration,[4] Ritschl insists that this notion of justification and the love of God entails the understanding of sanctification (good works)

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[1] Ibid., p. 160.

[2] Ibid., pp. 160-61.

[3] Ibid., p. 165.

[4] Infra, pp. 98-100.

as proceeding from the circumstance of being justified through Christ's righteousness.[1] I.e., the moral (or human factor) proceeds from the religious (or divine factor). For the purposes of this discussion, Ritschl's most succinct elaboration of this Reformation category appears in his comments on Bernard of Clairvaux:

> . . . hat Bernhard das Ganze des guten Werkes in der religioesen Betrachtung auf die goettliche Gnade, in der ethischen Betrachtung auf die durch die Gnade freie Freiheit des Willens zurueckgefuehrt. Er hat in der Form unmittelbarer Ueberzeugung den Doppelgedanken ergriffen in welchem die praktische Grundlage des evangelischen Christenthums ausgedrueckt ist, und in welchem die evangelische Theologie ihre Aufgabe zu erkennen hat, die Uebereinstimmung oder die Widerspruchslosigkeit beider Glieder zu beweisen. Denn wie wir unsern guten Willen religioes in die totale Abhaengigkeit von Gott versetzen, ohne ihm einen Spielraum fuer verdienstliche Geltung gegen Gott zu goennen, so sind wir uns ebendarum der Selbstaendigkeit unseres sittlichen Charakters gegen jede nicht goettliche, also auch gegen die hierarchische Bevormundung bewusst.[2]

On the basis of this analysis of the Reformation, Ritschl is emphatic that Reformation Christianity cannot be characterized as a doctrine or a set of doctrines. In the context of a discussion of Luther's principle of justification by faith, he writes,

> Aber ein Lehrprincip kann in dem Satze nicht nachgewiesen werden, sondern nur eine charakteristische Folgerung aus dem Princip der goettlichen Gnade, welche in Verbindung mit anderen Erkenntnissen ueber die Regelung und Werthbestimmung des christlichen Lebens an dieses Gebiet zunaechst hinanreicht.[3]

This raises the provocative and instructive question of the validity of the traditional formal/material scheme for interpreting the Reformation. This scheme was formulated for the purpose of clarifying the essential proclamation of the Reformation theology; it was usually formulated with

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[1] Ibid., pp. 173ff.

[2] Ibid., pp. 99-100. (Italics mine.) See also supra, note two, p.61.

[3] Ritschl, Pietismus, I, 37.

sola scriptura as the formal principle of the Reformation and with sola fide as the material principle. Ritschl devoted considerable attention to this question, and he was generally skeptical of this scheme's validity. He bases this skepticism on several grounds. In his essay, "Ueber die beiden Principien des Protestantismus: Antwort auf eine 25 Jahre alte Frage," (1876), Ritschl argues against the scheme on both historical and theological grounds. He objects to it historically simply because the designation, meaning, and usage of the two principles is so confused. In this essay, he points out that whereas some Lutheran theologians have designated sola scriptura as formal principle and sola fide material principle (Bretschneider, Beck),[1] others have just reversed the designation (Baier, Wegscheider, de Wette).[2] Others have substituted other designations entirely (Schleiermacher, Twesten).[3] On the basis of this evidence, Ritschl defies anyone to assert an historically consistent analysis of Reformation Christianity on the basis of this formal/material scheme. Furthermore, on historical grounds, such a scheme cannot even account for the distinctiveness of the Reformation. Even the Franciscans and the Anabaptists could adhere to these formulae, particularly to the principle of sola scriptura.[4]

Even more significant, however, for Ritschl, and more illuminating for our present study, are his theological objections to the formal/material scheme. He contends that the emphasis on scripture alone fails to take into account the Catholicity of the reformers and their reliance on tradition.[5]

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[1]Ritschl, "Ueber die beiden Principien des Protestantismus," in Gesammelte Aufsaetze (Freiburg i. B. and Leipzig: Mohr, 1893), pp. 234-37. Hereafter cited as Aufsaetze.

[2]Ibid., pp. 235, 7, 8.

[3]Ibid., pp. 240-43.

[4]Ritschl, Pietismus, I, 37.

[5]Ritschl, R.u.V. I, 164-65.

On the other hand, the emphasis on faith alone completely overlooks the fact that the reformers' work was meant to take place within the church, and that they conceived this faith to exist only within that community of saints.[1] Perhaps Ritschl's most vehement protest against this formal/material scheme is occasioned by what he considers to be its rationalistic tendency, which turns Reformation Christianity into a set of doctrines or into a school. I shall indicate at a later point how violently opposed this view is to Ritschl's own position.[2] At this point, it is sufficient to cite one passage from the Geschichte des Pietismus, which not only reveals Ritschl's opposition to the scheme in question, but also indicates the important role that the concept of Lebensfuehrung plays in his thought.

> So wie die Formel von den beiden Principien der Reformation gehandhabt zu werden pflegt, drueckt sie eine unzureichende Schaetzung dieser Epoche machenden Erscheinung aus. Man kann sich naemlich hierbei nur denken, dass die Reformation Luther's und der Anderen eine neue Gestalt theologischer Schule ins Leben gerufen, jedoch nicht, dass sie eine neue Stufe christlicher Lebensfuehrung ins Werk gesetzt habe, Dazu kommt, dass die Formel in sehr zufaelliger Weise, ohne umfassende Ueberlegung der Thatsachen zusammengestuempert ist. Das, was in ihr mit Recht gemeint und gesucht werden kann, hat Schleiermacher ausgesprochen, naemlich dass innerhalb der Abweichungen unter den evangelischen Theologen die Anerkennung der beiden Saetze das Minimum sei, was Einem zugemuthet werden muesse, um als evangelischer Theolog zu gelten.[3]

In summary, Ritschl interprets the heart of the Reformation as consisting in a proclamation of God's love which reconciles man through Jesus Christ and his righteousness. This proclamation stands in the context of the religious self-consciousness of the believer, however, and this means that the impact of this divine love is conceived of as effecting a relationship of reconciliation between God and man in which sanctification or human moral

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[1] Ibid., pp. 162f. and Ritschl, Aufsaetze, pp. 246-47.

[2] Infra,

[3] Ritschl, Pietismus, I, 37-38.

activity is engendered by God's prevenient action of grace.[1] Reformation Christianity conceives all of this as taking place within the church. Reformation Christianity, then, is marked by a total human condition, a Lebensfuehrung or Lebensideal, in which God's prevenient reconciling action and man's subsequent ethical response are held together in equilibrium. If God's action is not always held to be prevenient to man's response, the equilibrium is disturbed. This content of Reformation Christianity will become still clearer as we move to note how Ritschl sets it in sharp opposition to the Medieval Christianity to which the Reformation is nevertheless so closely related.

With this assessment of the differences between Medieval and Reformation Christianity, Ritschl closes his investigation of how the Reformation emerged from Medieval Christianity. The opposition which Ritschl sees existing between these two stages in Christian development rests on two broad issues, both of which are traced back ultimately to the equilibrium in which divine and human factors are held within the God-man relation. These two issues are soteriology and ecclesiology. Ritschl's analysis thus fits within the scheme that I outlined above.[2] He has gone into great detail to assert the unity, within the historical continuum, between Medieval and Reformation Christianity. This unity is of great scientific significance; without it, Ritschl could not undertake his historical investigation. But it is not of ultimate theological significance. Ritschl cannot let his historical interpretation rest until he has applied his axiological category to the two parties in question. Ritschl applies this category in his

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[1]See Hefner, Lutheran Quarterly, pp. 106-109.

[2]Supra, p. 62.

discussion of soteriology and ecclesiology as these notions are understood within Medieval and Reformation Christianity, respectively. As I shall point out, the application of this axiological category of Lebensfuehrung leads Ritschl to the conclusion that, within the physical continuity between these two epochs, there exists a fundamental discontinuity. And it is this fundamental discontinuity that is of ultimate theological significance to Ritschl (albeit within his larger concern for the fundamental continuity). It is the clear delineation of this discontinuity that informs the purpose of his historical interpretation.

The issue of soteriology is the issue of the God-man relation of reconciliation. And when Ritschl asserts an opposition between the two stages of Christian development on this issue, he clarifies that opposition in terms of justification, i.e., the action of God which establishes the relation of reconciliation, and in terms of Lebensfuehrung, i.e., the total condition of the believer's life which is engendered by this justifying action which reconciles. Finally, the source of this opposition lies in the two differing understandings of the equilibrium that should exist between divine and human factors within this God-man relation. And the evaluation of the relative desirability of the Reformation understanding over the Medieval is based on Ritschl's category of Lebensfuehrung, which defines what he believes to be the proper equilibrium.

The Medieval (Roman) and Reformation doctrines of justification differ both in definition and in intention. Ritschl's analysis of these differences reveals very clearly just what he believes is at stake in the opposition between these two forms of Christianity, as well as his conception of the essence of the Reformation faith. In the first place, one sees in the two doctrines of justification the tension between the Roman concern

for dogmatic objectivity in the description of Christ's meritorious work and the subsequent work of God, on the one hand, and the Reformation concern for a description of the subjective religious experience upon which God has acted in his grace. For Luther, for example, Christ's satisfaction is never so important as man's justification.

> Diese formale Veraenderung in der Stellung des Problems ist nun aber ein Merkmal von der Veraenderung der Art und des Inhaltes des Gedankens von der Rechtfertigung. Indem zunaechst Luther denselben in den Mittelpunkt des Interesses rueckt, und seine Deutung desselben als die entscheidene und unumgaengliche Wahrheit betont, meint er mit der Rechtfertigung durch den Glauben an Christus eine subjective religioese Erfahrung des in der Kirche stehenden Glaeubigen, und nicht einen objectiv theologischen Satz der kirchlichen Glaubenslehre.[1]

Luther is thus able to explain justification as "eine in sich geschlossene durchgehende Erfahrung des Glaeubigen."[2] The Roman doctrine can never serve to describe this unified experience, because of the dogmatic and ecclesiastical baggage which it carries with it in its doctrine of justification.[3]

This difference in approach and in the method of expressing the doctrine of justification is a manifestation of two fundamentally different understandings of the issue, which Ritschl describes thus:

> Die roemisch-katholische Lehre von der Justification soll naemlich erklaeren, wie und durch welche Mittel aus einem Suender ein activ Gerechter wird, der als solcher auch von Gott der Wahrheit gemaess beurtheilt werden kann. Hingegen der reformatorische Sinn der religioesen Erfahrung von der Rechtfertigung ist der, dass der Glaeubige, welcher als solcher wiedergeboren und Glied der Kirche, welcher durch den heiligen Geist faehig und wirksam ist, gute Werke zu erzeugen, wegen der fortdauernden Unvollkommenheit derselben nicht in ihnen, sondern nur in der mittlerischen vollkommen gerechten Leistung Christi, die er sich durch den Glauben aneignet, seine Geltung vor Gott, seine Gerechtigkeit und den Grund seiner stetigen Heilsgewissheit findet.[4]

This difference of perspectives on the doctrine of justification leads each of the respective parties to different understandings of

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[1]Ritschl, R.u.V. I, 126. [2]Ibid., p. 127.

[3]Ibid. [4]Ibid., p. 127.

sanctification or regeneration and its relation to justification. In this connection Ritschl makes judgments whose soundness has been underlined by current discussions between Protestants and Roman Catholics. He makes the judgment that the Roman perspective leads naturally to a concern for gratia cooperans. By this he means that the Roman (Medieval) doctrine does not necessarily deny God's prevenient grace in redeeming man; it does not emphasize merit as influencing God's initial action; but it does tend to allow merit a role in the increase and continuance of grace. And, as Ritschl points out in his discussion of Bernard,

> Diese Annahme draengt dem Bewusstsein, das sich von ihr leiten laesst, den Eindruck der Abwechselung zwischen dem Wirken der Gnade und dem des freien Willens unumgaenglich auf; and das dieser Annahme entsprechende menschliche Selbstgefuehl wird sich straeuben, sich durch den allgemeinen Gedanken der Gnade beherrschen zu lassen, weil die Voraussetzung gilt, dass der Besitz der besondern Gnade durch die verdienstliche Anstrengung des eigenen Willens beherrscht sei.[1]

This leads Ritschl to the observation that the Roman and Reformation understandings are so different that their respective doctrines of justification dare not be compared as if they referred to comparable realities, on a one-to-one basis. He sees evidence of this in the fact the Roman theologians can speak with perfect consistency of justification and regeneration, whereas the Reformation theology must speak of justification or regeneration.[2] Ritschl identifies the really anti-evangelical tendency of Roman Christianity with this preoccupation with gratia cooperans, i.e., with the influence of merit on the increase and continuance of grace, rather than with the notion of merit per se.[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 101. See also the discussion of gratia cooperans in the theology of St. Thomas, pp. 69ff.

[2] Ibid., p. 128.

[3] Ibid., p. 101.

Probably the most serious aspect of this opposition between Medieval and Reformation Christianity, at least in Ritschl's mind, is the different category of Lebensfuehrung which follows from the fundamental structure of the God-man relation as each party understands it. Ritschl considers it to be thoroughly consistent with its understanding of the God-man relation that the Medieval Lebensideal (or Lebensfuehrung) was that of the monastic existence. He writes in the Geschichte des Pietismus,

> Das katholische Christenthum hat sein Lebensideal in dem Moenchthum, in der Verbindung der ueber Gottes allgemeines Gesetz hinausgreifenden Leistungen der Armuth, der Keuschheit, des Gehor ams (gegen die Ordenoberen). In diesen Tugenden erreicht man, wie es heisst, die im Christenthum dargebotenen uebernatuerliche Bestimmung der Menschen, welche in ihre urspruenglichen Erschaffung nicht vorgesehen war; man tritt so in das Leben der Engel ein; der Moenchstand, so verstanden, ist die christliche Vollkommenheit.[1]

This notion of the Lebensideal as including the perfect legal obedience finds a counterpart in the Roman contention that merit can insure the continuance and increase of grace, in the interaction between grace and freedom, and in the refusal to subordinate man's freedom to that grace.[2]

The Reformation Lebensideal (and this is also the heart of Ritschl's own position) stems from an understanding of the God-man relation which does superordinate the divine factor over the human, and which believes this to be the only proper equilibrium between the two factors. The human activity of regeneration can in no wise be identified with justification, even though that activity can be engendered by the justifying action of God.[3] Ritschl describes this Reformation Ideal in the following terms:

> Wenn der Protestantismus gegen das praktische Gewicht aufkommen soll, welches der Katholicismus in jener Schaetzung des Moenchthums und in der Verbreitung moenchischer Froemmigkeit auch unter den Laien besitzt,

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[1]Ritschl, Pietismus, I, 38-39. [2]Supra, pp. 75-76.

[3]Ritschl, Pietismus, I, 40-41.

> so muss auch er einen Massstab qualitativer Vollkommenheit aufweisen koennen. Nun das ist auch der Fall. So wie am Suendenstande ein hauptsaechliches Merkmal der Mangel an Ehrfurcht und an Vertrauen zu Gott ist, so besteht die Vollkommenheit nach der Behauptung der Augsburgischen Confession eben in Ehrfurcht und Vertrauen zu Gott in allen Lagen des Lebens; vollstaendiger ausgedrueckt in Ehrfurcht, Vertrauen zu Gottes huelfreicher Vorsehung, in Gebet und in der treuen Erfuellung des Berufes.[1] . . . In diesem Zusammenhang bewaehrt sich die Bedeutung des Satzes von der Rechtfertigung aus dem Glauben, naemlich daran, dass aus ihr der Gewinn des Vertrauens auf Gottes Vorsehung in allen Lagen des Lebens, welches dem Suender abgeht, erklaert und abgeleitet wird. Dieses ist die eigenthuemliche Probe der Versoehnung mit Gott, dass man auch mit dem von Gott geleiteten Weltlauf, wie schwer er uns etwa faellt, versoehnt wird.[2]

This is perhaps Ritschl's clearest expression of the Christian Lebensfuehrung which forms the content of the axiological category which he applies so decisively in his historical investigations. This Lebensfuehrung is marked by diligence in one's vocation, accompanied by complete trust in God's providence.

The opposition between Roman and Reformation Christianity on the issue of ecclesiology is not unrelated to this foregoing discussion of their opposition on the matter of soteriology. Briefly stated, the Roman position is that the legal community within the church is coterminous with the religious community, whereas the Reformation position holds that the legal community is an instrument of the religious community.[3]

This emphasis on the legal form of the church is directly correlated to the Medieval Lebensideal, which also emphasized, according to Ritschl, the regulated achievement of believers as an appropriate work before God.[4] The Reformation view, which subordinates the legal to the religious, parallels the Reformation understanding of the God-man relation, in which the

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[1] Ibid., p. 39.

[2] Ibid., p. 40. (Italics mine.)

[3] Ibid., pp. 43-44.

[4] Ibid., p. 18.

ethical is subordinated to the religious, or the human is subordinated to the divine.

This concludes Ritschl's attempt to answer the question of how Reformation Christianity emerged from Medieval Christianity. His answer can be summarized thus: Within the given, physical continuity of the historical continuum, the Reformation constitutes a new stage in the historical development of Christianity. It implies a rupture with the previous stage, because, in reference to the heart of the Christian faith, namely, a certain Lebensfuehrung which emerges from reconciliation with God, Reformation Christianity insisted on maintaining the authentically traditional Christian understanding against the Roman Catholic perversion of it.

How the Reformation of Luther Became The Lutheran Church

One of the most cogent testimonies to the validity of the thesis that Ritschl's theological work is shaped by a preoccupation with historical continuity is the fact that Ritschl felt the necessity to come to terms with each of the major manifestations within Christian history whose support might be necessary for his purposes or whose opposition might constitute a threat to the validity of his own interpretation of Christianity. We have already examined his attempts to come to terms with apostolic, ancient Catholic, Medieval, and Reformation Christianity. In each case, by applying the category of a certain Lebensfuehrung, he has established either the continuity or the discontinuity which that category dictates. Now we turn to one more of these historical entities with which Ritschl feels he must come to terms, orthodox Lutheranism.

Here, too, Ritschl follows the scheme discussed above, establishing a simple physical unity within the historical continuum, as well as a more significant theological discontinuity. He establishes the continuity so that he can pursue his historical investigation on a valid, scientific basis. And he establishes a theological discontinuity so that he can reject an inadequate soteriology and, even more, an inadequate ecclesiology, which are occasioned by an improper understanding of the God-man relation. He followed the same procedure in his analysis of the relation between Medieval and Reformation Christianity. As Ritschl illumines the theology of the Reformation in contrast to later orthodox developments, he illumines the theological position which he came to identify with his own.

Before Ritschl can answer the question of how Luther's Reformation became the Lutheran church, he must demolish the opinion that the Lutheran church represents a "fall" from Luther. More specifically, he rejects the judgment of the nineteenth century German historian, Heinrich Heppe (1820-79), that this "fall" was personified in Melanchthon's deviation from Luther.[1] In combatting this interpretation, Ritschl gives expression to a principle that we have already encountered several times, namely, the unsuitability of the notion of a "fall" as a category for the scientific historian:

> Gesetzt dass dieses [i.e., the tension between Melanchthon and Luther] alles richtig waere, so koennte man sich bei Heppes Erklaerung des Umschwungs der deutschen Reformation zur lutherischen Kirche schon desshalb nicht beruhigen, weil die Annahme eines einfachen Abfalls von der fruehern Richtung des Protestantismus das Gegentheil des geschichtlichen Verfahrens ist. Was vorlaeufig als Abfall von der Vergangenheit oder als Bruch mit derselben erscheint, darf man in der Erforschung der Geschichte nicht als die vollstaendige Thatsache hinnehmen

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[1]Heinrich Heppe, Geschichte der deutschen Protestantismus in den Jahren 1555-1581 (4 vols.; Marburg: N. G. Elwert, 1852-59), I, 72-90.

> <u>oder fuer dieselbe ausgeben</u>. Vielmehr legt ein solcher Schein grade die Aufgabe nahe, durch die genauere Erforschung der Thatsachen dasjenige festzustellen, was ihm zuwider und was geeignet ist, ihn aufzuheben.[1]

The similarity of this analysis, formally, at least, with Ritschl's analysis of the emergence of the old Catholic church is striking. There, as I outlined it in the preceding chapter, Ritschl rejected the notion of an historical "fall." But even more striking, he also rejected the notion that such a fall was personified in the disagreement between two men--Paul and Peter.[2]

Rather than such a fall, Ritschl believes that the changing conception of the church during the first years of the Reformation is a much more valid key to the interpretation of the development which culminated in the Lutheran church.[3] Even as he asserts this as the key for interpreting this development, Ritschl rejects the interpretation set forth by the group which he terms, "die heutigen exclusiven Lutheraner," to the effect that the emergence of the Lutheran church is to be dated from the presentation of the Augsburg Confession in 1530.[4] This position can be set forth by these "exclusivistic Lutherans" only because they insist on equating the doctrine elaborated in the Confessio Augustana with the Lutheran church; they do this on the basis of their interpretation of the seventh article of the Confessio.[5]

Ritschl enumerates several reasons why he cannot accept the 1530 date for the emergence of the Lutheran church or the equation of the Confessio Augustana with Lutheranism. In the first place, Ritschl does not

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[1]Ritschl, "Die Entstehung der lutherischen Kirche," in <u>Aufsaetze</u>, pp. 171-72.

[2]<u>Supra</u>, pp. 43-46.

[3]Ritschl, <u>Aufsaetze</u>, pp. 173-74.

[4]<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 175.

[5]<u>Ibid.</u>

believe that the Lutheran reformers had any intention in 1530 of establishing a separate church over against the Roman church. He writes,

> Erstens, naemlich ist die Reformation, indem deren Umfang und Tragweite fuer Luther selbst erst allmaehlich klar geworden ist, von Anfang an auf den ganzen Bestand der abendlaendischen allgemeinen Kirche gerichtet, und auf nichts weniger als die Gruendung einer Particularkirche neben der roemischen. Die Ansaetze zu einer solchen Kirchenbildung, welche die Evangelischen etwa seit 1525 unternehmen mussten, weil die Reformation von Bischoefen und Papst abgewiesen wurde, werden zunaechst noch nicht als etwas Endgueltiges angesehen.[1]

Ritschl believes that the reformers wanted above all to reach a reconciliation with the Roman church--even as late as 1555.[2]

Ritschl's most significant argument against the exclusivistic Lutheran dating of the emergence of the Lutheran church in 1530, and one which comes very close to the heart of his own theological position, is one in which he asserts that the reformers' understanding of the church rested on their understanding of the term doctrina evangelii, in article seven of the Confessio Augustana. Agreement on the doctrina evangelii is judged necessary for church unity.[3] The problem posed by this term concerns which of the two words is to be deemed pre-eminent. Ritschl sets up the Fragestellung in the following manner:

> Zweitens wird freilich die zur Einheit der Kirche als nothwendig geachtete Uebereinstimmung in der doctrina evangelii der angefuehrten Deutung [i.e., the interpretation of the exclusivistic Lutherans] faehig sein, wenn man den Satz ausser allem Zusammenhang mit den

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[1] Ibid., pp. 175-176. [2] Ibid., p. 176.

[3] In the Confessio Augustana itself, the terms doctrina evangelii are rendered by the German phrase, "das . . . nach reinem Verstand das Evangelium gepredigt [wird]." The term doctrina thus corresponds to predigen (See Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche [2nd rev. ed.; Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1952], p. 61). The Augustana, as well as the Apologia, seems to employ the word doctores at times with the connotation of Prediger (see Ibid., pp. 266, 269). This throws an interesting light on Ritschl's separation of doctrina from academic theology.

> gegebenen Umstaenden versteht. Aber es ist auch nur moeglich doctrina evangelii zu lesen, und diese Verbindung der Woerter von dem Complex der Saetze der C.A. zu verstehen; an sich ebenso moeglich ist es, doctrina evangelii zu betonen, und dann erscheint das erstere Wort nur als Huelfswort fuer das zweite. Diese Erklaerung aber ist aus einer Reihe von Gruenden die nach geschichtlichem Maassstabe einzig moegliche und nothwendige.[1]

Ritschl is insistent that this term must be read and understood as doctrina evangelii, because the Augustana goes on to speak of this evangelium as that of the preached word and of the sacrament. This can mean only one thing: "die Erklaerung des gnaedigen Willens Gottes und nicht als die Reihe der Dogmen als menschlicher Erkenntnisse."[2] In other words, doctrina evangelii refers to the reality of sola gratia, which must be understood, believed and taught.[3] No specific doctrine and no specific view of the sacraments (as outlined in the tenth article of the Augustana) can meet these requirements of belief, and so they cannot be the referent of the seventh article.[4] It is clear that Ritschl is here rejecting what he considers to be an inadequate concept of the church because it makes the unity of the church dependent on doctrine in such a way as to exclude the category Lebensfuhrung which Ritschl believes to be central to the Christian faith. Ritschl's intent is made clear in the following quotation; he has just set down the principle that when Luther spoke of the marks of the church, the presence of which was necessary, and agreement on which was a requisite for church unity, he referred to the reality of the religious life, in which God's grace is appropriated.

> Im Vergleich mit diesen Mitteln der Aneignung der goettlichen Gnade treten die vorausgesetzten Vorstellungen von Gott, von der Suende, u.s.w. in den Hintergrund; d.h. es handelt sich gar nicht um den

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[1] Ibid., p. 176.

[2] Ibid., p. 177.

[3] Ibid., pp. 177, 179.

[4] Ibid., p. 178.

> theoretischen Besitz einer Glaubensregel, in welcher jeder Theil ebenso viel Werth haette, wie alle anderen, weil auf jeden gleich viel theologische Arbeit verwendet waere. Antithetisch ausgedrueckt, bedeutet der reine Verstand des Evangeliums die Ausschliessung menschlichen Verdienstes von dem Zusammenhang der Darbietung und der Aneignung der Gnade Gottes.[1]

In accordance with this, the Torgau Articles clearly assert that the knowledge of Christ and faith in him is the foundation on which teachers erect doctrines of varying worth.[2] Ritschl summarizes by saying that the doctrine of the gospel that was held in early Lutheranism was the clear comprehension of God's grace in Christ; it was not equated with the Augustana.[3] There is therefore no basis for the claim that the presentation of the Augustana, in and of itself, marked the emergence of the Lutheran church.

This understanding of the doctrina evangelii of Augustana, Article VII, clarifies the real basis for the Lutheran opposition to the Roman church in 1530. This opposition is not based on the reformers' self-consciousness of themselves as one church pitted against another church. Rather, they opposed the Roman Catholics because they (the Romans) conceived of the church as coterminous with its existence as a legal entity.[4] This was diametrically opposed to Melanchthon's formulation in the Augustana that the church is not just a legal entity, but principally a community of faith and the Holy Spirit. The church is a legal entity, but this is not its chief mark. Much was at stake here, in view of the Lutheran understanding of doctrina evangelii, because the reliance on the external legal forms of the church is a denial of the sola gratia which constitutes the doctrina evangelii upon which there must be agreement if the church is to be one. To base the real existence of the church on the legalities of cultus and human relationships

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[1] Ibid., p. 179.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 181.

[4] Ibid., pp. 181-82.

is to give such prominence to merit as to undermine the sola gratia.[1] Ritschl is not arguing for a notion of the church as invisible; he is arguing against a notion of the church which substitutes legal forms for the appropriation of God's grace as the decisively distinguishing mark of the church.[2]

Ritschl's final argument against the exclusivistic Lutheran hypothesis which dated the rise of the Lutheran church with the Augustana rests on his assertion that the Lutheran reformers do not (until after 1539) use the concept of the church in a substantive manner, but rather only in a critical way. By this, he means that they do not equate the church with their party, nor do they (except in the Schmalkald Articles) deny that the Roman Catholics are the church. Throughout the Augustana, the Apology, the Schmalkald Articles, and Luther's treatise, "Von Conciliis und Kirchen," the Lutherans use the concept of the church in a negative, critical sense, in order to attack what they consider to be the Roman perversions of the church as the community of faith and of the Holy Spirit.[3] They leave the door open to the Romans, and they do not equate their own work with the church. Concerning the concept of the church as it appears in these documents, Ritschl writes:

> Von jenem Begriff der Kirche aus wird nur das praktische Urtheil nahegelegt, dass die in ihrer staatlichen Verfassung und ihrer Lehre vom Verdienst gegen Gott feststehende roemische Kirche nicht die Kirche sei. Hingegen wird hier auch nicht andeutungsweise der Gedanke laut, dass die nich ihren wesentlichen Merkmalen gedachte Kirche in den der Reformation Luthers folgenden Gemeindecomplexen bestehe. Diese Thatsache wird ignoriert, indem eben der Bestand der authentischen Kirche nur in den auf der Erde zerstreuten Glaeubigen nachgewiesen wird. Diese Zurueckhaltung hat unleugbar den Sinn, dass die Aussoehnung mit den Gegnern auf das Programm der Reformation hin offen gehalten

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., pp. 182-83.

[3] Ibid., pp. 184-86.

> werden soll. Hienach ist auch zu verstehen, dass in der C.A. nicht ausgesprochen ist, deren Lehre sei die katholische Glaubensregel, sondern nur, deren Lehre verstosse nicht gegen die katholische Kirche.[1]

Ritschl points out further, in order to buttress this argument, that the reformers did not call themselves "Lutherans," but preferred to be considered as "Catholics."[2]

All of this argumentation is aimed at demonstrating that the change in the reformers' understanding of the church did not emerge with the Confessio Augustana in 1530. His own theory is that the Reformation stance which was characterized by the understanding of doctrina evangelii as outlined above began to change in the years from 1537 to 1540. He believes that Melanchthon is the chief agent of this change. In 1537, writing in behalf of the Schmalkald Confederation, Melanchthon asserts, for the first time, that the Roman church can no longer be considered to be Catholic, whereas the Schmaldkaldic churches are the true Catholics.[3] Ritschl continues,

> Zur Legitimation dieser Behauptung wird auf das dem Kaiser zu Augsburg ueberreichte Bekenntnis verwiesen, dessen Inhalt zugleich die reine Lehre des Evangeliums sei. Es sei das Gebot Gottes und demnach sittliche Pflicht, an diesem Bekenntnis zu Christus festzuhalten, auch wenn man dadurch mit dem Papst uneinig wird. Eine Entscheidung dieses Streites sei einem vom Papst geleiteten Concil nicht zu ueberlassen, da derselbe schwerlich auf eine Pruefung der Lehre aus dem Worte Gottes, d.h. aus dem Evangelium und den apostolischen Schriften, eingehen werde. Also die durch die Augsburgische Confession bezeichnete Kirche ist die katholische, das ist der neue Schritt, der durch diese oeffentliche Erklaerung gethan wird.[4]

From this assertion, says Ritschl, it was inevitable that the Augustana should be equated with the doctrina evangelii.[5]

Ritschl does not accuse Melanchthon of any evil intent in this alteration of the Reformation concept of the church. On the contrary,

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[1]Ibid., p. 184. [2]Ibid., pp. 184-85. [3]Ibid., pp. 186-87.

[4]Ibid., p. 187. [5]Ibid.

he considers Melanchthon's action "durchaus correct und charaktervoll."[1] His action was forced upon him by the turn of events in relations between the Lutherans and the Roman Catholics. The policies of the Roman church and the emperor during the years 1537-40, if they had succeeded, would have destroyed precisely those emphases which the reformers considered central to their understanding of Christian faith and worship.[2] In the face of such consequences, the self-consciousness of the reformers was heightened, to the point where they had to insist that their insights were both catholic and unchangeable.[3]

But, even though this alteration of the Reformation insights was unavoidable, it resulted in several perversions of those insights. In the first place, the church now comes to be empirically designated, i.e., in the Schmalkaldic "Gemeindecomplexen." Heretofore the reformers had acknowledged the concept of the church as the criterion for designating every empirical form. Now conditions are just reversed.[4] Secondly, the concept of pura evangelii doctrina undergoes a decisive alteration. Materially, the content and definition of the term is altered. The emphasis is now on the doctrina, rather than on the evangelium. The term no longer refers to the reality of the sola gratia, but rather to all of the articles of the Confessio Augustana.[5] Formally, the alteration is even greater, and even more serious, because the Reformation insights are becoming estranged from their previous rooting in a Lebensfuehrung. Ritschl writes,

> . . . formell kommt dieser richtige Verstand des Evangeliums der empirischen Kirche zu einer selbststaendigeren Bedeutung als der frueher behauptete. Denn in dem 7. Artikel der C.A. wird der reine Verstand

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[1] Ibid., p. 198.

[2] Ibid., p. 197.

[3] Ibid., pp. 197-98.

[4] Ibid., p. 188.

[5] Ibid.

> des Evangeliums nur als das Mittel fuer den innern Zweck der Kirche in Betracht gezogen, naemlich damit durch das Evangelium Gottes die Gemeinde der Heiligen hervorgebracht werde; jetzt kommt die reine Lehre des Evangeliums als das genuegende Unterscheidungszeichen der empirischen Kirche gegen eine falsche Kirche zur Geltung, also zu einem aeussern Zwecke.[1]

In other words, doctrine rather than commitment and faith becomes the distinguishing characteristic of the church.

Finally, Melanchthon adds an empirical mark of the church which had not been mentioned in the Augustana, namely, common worship of God.[2] Ritschl sees this as a considerable addition to Luther's simple statement that prayer is a mark of the church. Furthermore, he believes that Melanchthon continued steadfast in this insistence that empirical unity in worship is a mark of the church.[3]

These alterations made a profound impact on the subsequent development of the Lutheran Reformation. Ritschl distinguishes two elements in this development. The first is the trend towards differentiating between Lutherans and Roman Catholics solely on external marks, chiefly on the basis of theological statements, ecclesiastical polity, and ordinances for the conduct of the lives of their adherents.[4] The second important element at work in this later development is the character of Melanchthon and his theological work. Ritschl asserts that Melanchthon was insensitive to the distinction between the rational, polemical theological formulation which was necessary for the Lutheran church in its apologetic tasks in relation to the external world, and the thetic, unifying activity of the church's thought within its own community as it seeks a clearer understanding of the gospel of God's grace.[5] This insensitivity colored all of Melanchthon's

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[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid., pp. 188-89. [3] Ibid., p. 189.

[4] Ibid., p. 189. [5] Ibid., pp. 189-90.

work, and it rendered him incapable of doing justice to the positive, edifying aspect of the church's thinking activity within its own community. Ritschl emphasizes the importance of this weakness of Melanchthon's by asking the following questions:

> Wie wird es nun werden, wenn Melanchthon, in dieser Unklarheit der Empfindung ueber seine eignen Arbeiten, vorherrschend eingenommen durch die Anlaesse zur Polemik, und dadurch an der ruhigen Verfolgung der dogmatischen Probleme verhindert, denjenigen Gesichtspunkt, welcher die Kirche nach aussen zu vertreten geschickt war, auch als den zureichenden Maassstab fuer die inneren Beziehungen der Kirche verwendet? Wird die Lehre von der Kirche correct bleiben, wenn das Lehrbekenntnis, die pura doctrina evangelii, welche die wahre Kirche von der falschen unterscheiden laesst, anstatt des Evangelium dei zum innern Maassstabe und Grunde der wahren Kirche erhoben wird?[1]

It is not difficult to understand why Ritschl is alarmed by these two elements in the development of the Lutheran Reformation. They were responsible for guiding that development in a direction that was diametrically opposed to Ritschl's own understanding of what the church should be. When the Lutherans accepted external forms as the distinguishing marks of the church, they entered upon a path that led to an ever greater formal similarity to the Catholicism which they were fighting. This is also the Catholicism that Ritschl found to be a perversion of authentic Christianity in his analysis of early Christianity,[2] and also in his investigation of the relation between Medieval and Reformation Christianity.[3] In these studies, he criticized Catholicism's polity, because it emphasized external legal forms so as to undermine the sola gratia. He levels the same criticism against the Lutheran tendency to raise up an ecclesiastical authority of doctrine and practice which became, in its formal authority, very like the Roman.[4] In the final analysis, then, Ritschl opposes this ecclesiological

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[1] Ibid., p. 190. (Italics mine.)
[2] Supra, pp. 50-51.
[3] Supra, pp. 78-79.
[4] Ritschl, Aufsaetze, p. 196.

development in Lutheranism because it undermines a soteriological concern which he considers to be crucial.

Ritschl opposes Melanchthon's confusion between doctrina evangelii and evangelium for similar reasons. This confusion continued to assert itself, to the extent that the Word of God came to be equivalent to ecclesiastical tradition. This made a mockery of the sola scriptura which the reformers had enunciated.[1] This development culminates in the Formula of Concord, where Melanchthon's attitude is accepted without reservation, in Ritschl's opinion.[2] Ritschl considers the same tendency to be at work when Flacius proclaims Luther as the "third Elijah," and when Luther's word, too, is accepted in some quarters as equivalent to the gospel itself.[3]

Ritschl summarizes this development in a term that comes to be his most thoroughly pejorative epithet, Schulmaessigkeit.[4] Ritschl opposes this phenomenon, because it is diametrically opposed to his understanding of the Christian faith as entailing, most profoundly, a Lebensfuehrung. He makes this clear in the following discussion of Melanchthon's "error."

> Indem das Merkmal des schulmaessigen richtigen Lehrbegriffs am geeignesten war, zwischen der wahren Kirche und der falschen unterscheiden zu lassen, hat Melanchthon gemeint, dass er auch als das entscheidene Hauptmerkmal, ja als der wesentliche Grund fuer den innern Bestand und Zusammenhang der rechten Kirche anzusehen sei. Aber wenn die schulmaessig ausgepraegte Lehre dazu hinreicht, den Werth der rechten Kirche nach aussen zu vertreten, so folgt doch daraus nicht, dass die Kirche an und fuer sich eine Abart von Schule sei.[5]

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[1]Ibid., p. 207. [2]Ibid., p. 208. [3]Ibid., pp. 209-12.

[4]This term remains untranslated throughout this dissertation, because of the rich connotations included in the German usage. The root word Schule signifies both "school" and "party." Thus, Schulmaessigkeit refers both to the intellectualism of the former and to the sectarian tendency of the latter.

[5]Ibid., p. 201.

The residue of the original reformation concept of the church militated against this Schulmaessigkeit, but Melanchthon stifled the force of this residual consciousness. His "Wittenberger Reformation," written in 1545, seems to confirm this judgment, according to Ritschl. Of it, he writes,

> Aber so viel ist klar, dass der Schwerpunkt des kirchlichen Selbstgefuehls auch in diesem Actenstueck in das Bekenntnis der Kirche und nicht mehr in das Evangelium Gottes gelegt wird. Diesem Umstand aber entspricht die Formel, dass die Kirche eine Art Schule sei.[1]

When a theological document is equated with the gospel of God's grace, then the church has become a school. When the Lutheran church is distinguishable from the "false church" chiefly by its theological statements, then the two groups are not different churches, but rather different schools or parties, similar to the Medieval schools. This, says Ritschl, marks the real beginning of the Lutheran church, and this is the root of its error and perversion.[2] Its existence is itself a contradiction, because it makes the claim to be the Catholic church, but its comportment is appropriate only to a school.[3]

This foregoing analysis accounts for the emergence of the Lutheran church from Luther's Reformation. Ritschl concludes that its founder is Melanchthon, even though he was later discredited, because he was judged to have deviated from the very pura doctrina evangelii that he had elevated to highest ecclesiastical authority, as the chief mark of the church itself.[4] Ritschl even suggests that Melanchthon later reversed his position of the indispensability and unalterability of this doctrina; but, by the time he made this reversal, he had already fallen victim to his own earlier views.[5]

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[1] Ibid., p. 202. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid., pp. 202-203.

[4] Ibid., pp. 214-16. [5] Ibid., pp. 216-17.

Continuing Reformation--A Critique and A Programme

This section, in which attention turns to the theme of continuing Reformation in Ritschl's historical-theological work, is crucial for this dissertation. This notion of continuing Reformation constitutes the goal towards which all of Ritschl's historical investigation ultimately tended. It constitutes his effort to bring up to date the historical continuity with which he has been preoccupied. The transition in Ritschl's work between sixteenth century Reformation and continuing Reformation is also the transition between his participation in this historical continuity as imperative and participation in it as indicative. As I argued in the Introduction,[1] this participation in the continuity as imperative was characterized by the activity of clarifying a category which could bear this continuity and give it expression, as well as the demonstration that this continuity does in fact exist, together with the elaboration of its content and meaning. This work is preparatory (at least it is preparatory if the theologian possesses a propensity for systematic thinking; and Ritschl did exhibit such a propensity) to the work which characterizes participation in the continuity as indicative, namely the positive expounding of the content and meaning of the continuity. The imperative in this instance tends to involve the theologian in polemic, whereas the indicative involves him in proclamation. The two are never wholly separated in any single work of Ritschl's, but one can be said to predominate over the other in various ways. In his notion of continuing Reformation, Ritschl summarizes the force of his polemical activity, and, in its historical dimension, at least, brings it to something of a conclusion. At the same time, he illumines the ongoing significance and intention of this continuity so as to set the stage for the proclamatory

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[1] Supra, pp. 9-11.

activity which characterizes his full participation in the continuity as indicative. This is not to suggest that Ritschl could not engage in the proclamatory activity until the polemical work had been brought to a conclusion. Indeed, he engaged in this activity long before his final polemical historical work was finished--if indeed, it was ever finished. The polemic is preparatory to the proclamation, not from an existential point of view, but rather from logical and systematic considerations. The same preoccupation with a certain historical continuity informs both activities. It remains central. In his systematic and scholarly thoroughness, Ritschl understood that he was called upon to enter into several types of activity in behalf of this continuity--exposition, legitimation, documentation, and defense. As he speaks of the continuing Reformation theology, all of these activities are brought together in an unusual manner.

Ritschl's notion of continuing Reformation includes both a critique and a programme. On the basis of what he considers to be the essence of Reformation and apostolic Christianity, resp. its understanding of the God-man relationship which emerges from reconciliation, Ritschl exercises a vigorous theological critique of the reformers. But the purpose of this critique is always to carry forward the reformers' own intention. And Ritschl devoted fully as much attention to the elaboration of this ongoing expression of Reformation Christianity as he did to the documentation of his critique. Ritschl identifies this attempt to carry forward the intention of the Reformation with his own theological purpose. His own theological achievement can, with some justification, be called an attempt at continuing Reformation. By this I mean that it is in the indicatives and imperatives contained in apostolic and Reformation Christianity that Ritschl finds the substance and strategy of his own theological career. Inasmuch as this is

the case, it is in this section that the thesis should attain its clearest statement: namely, that Ritschl's own constructive theological work is shaped by his historical judgments and commitments.

There are three aspects to Ritschl's critique of the reformers, each of which leads to a programme that Ritschl actually attempted to carry out. These three aspects are the historical, the systematic theological and the religious. The historical aspect is one which I have discussed at several points in this dissertation; indeed, the larger part of this study is an elaboration of this historical critique and programme. Therefore, a brief mention suffices here. Ritschl charges that the reformers did not take full advantage of the possibilities for demonstrating that Reformation Christianity, specifically the doctrine of justification, was Catholic, i.e., that it was in continuity with early Christianity, and that the Roman position was in fact an innovation. They failed to seize this opportunity largely because they were ignorant of the historical materials, or else because they were strangely unwilling to utilize them.[1] Most glaring of all is the reformers' failure to push strongly enough the foundation of their position which lay in the ecumenical dogmas of the Incarnation and the Trinity. These dogmas not only would have served as a basis for demonstrating the Catholicity of the reformers, but would also have identified them indissolubly with the Holy Roman Empire. The following quotation illumines Ritschl's expectations of what the reformers could have accomplished if they had paid proper attention to the prosecution of their historical advantage.

> Die Protestanten konnten den Anspruch, dass ihre Kirche die katholische sei, nur in ziemlich ungenauer Art beweisen. Fuer unsere nachtraegliche Geschichtsbetrachtung ist es ja klar, dass die lutherische Rechtfertigungslehre die Formel fuer eine Gedankenrichtung ist, welche in der

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[1]Ritschl, "Die Entstehung der lutherischen Kirche," in Aufsaetze, pp. 191-92.

> abendlaendische Kirche von jeher als Correctur des entgegengesetzte Dogma bemerkbar ist. Ferner kann es nur bestaetigt werden, dass die saechlichen Institutionen der roemischen Kirche, verglichen mit dem kirchlichen Alterthum, Neuerungen sind. Indem die Protestanten diesen Maassstab geltend machten, konnten sie in manchen Beziehungen gerade ihre Neuerungen als den alten bestand bezeichnen.[1]

If it succeeds in demonstrating nothing else, this dissertation should have made clear how much effort Ritschl devoted to the historical programme that grew out of this critique of the reformers. That which, in his opinion, the reformers failed to do, he assumed as his theological and scholarly obligation to perform.[2] He devoted at least three major works (R.u.V. I, II, and Entstehung), over a period of twenty-five years, to filling this lacuna in the Protestant argument.

From considerations of systematic theology, Ritschl criticizes the reformers for systematic and scientific inadequacies. They did not adequately elaborate the systematic whole within which their practical religious insights belonged.[3] As a result they fell into unfortunate self-contradiction and ambiguity. In the Geschichte des Pietismus, Ritschl levels his criticism particularly at Melanchthon and his followers. He accuses them of a "mangelhafte wissenschaftliche Disposition," which fails to relate religious insights systematically with the world, God and man, so as to exhibit their fullness in a consistent manner.[4]

This "mangelhafte wissenschaftliche Disposition" results in a rather considerable confusion, particularly in respect to the understanding of justification and regeneration. First of all, it led to the failure on the part of the reformers and their successors to grasp the real relationship

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[1] Ibid., pp. 191-92. (Italics mine.)
[2] Supra, note one, p. 37.
[3] Ritschl, R.u.V. I, pp. 127-28.
[4] Ritschl, Pietismus, I, 86.

between the Reformation and Roman Catholic doctrines of justification. The systematic defects of their theological exposition caused the reformers to overlook the significance of the fact that the Romans equated justification and regeneration, in contrast to the reformers themselves, who placed regeneration within the system as a response to justification.[1] The result is that the Reformation theological system must put into two or three doctrines what the Romans put into one. Not understanding this adequately, the reformers and their successors allowed themselves to fall into the "absurd" (widersinnig) situation in which their doctrine of justification was compared directly with its Roman counterpart, as if the two were univocal in meaning.[2]

Furthermore, their systematic confusion made it impossible for the proponents of Reformation Christianity to express clearly the grounds for the difference between their doctrine of justification and that of the Romans. Once they had been forced onto the same plane of argumentation with the Romans, the Reformation theologians tried to validate their case on the same grounds as their opponents. This led to nothing short of perversion.[3] The Lutheran theologians failed to make it clear that their distinctive approach to justification was necessitated by religious realities,[4] rather than by the requirements of objective doctrinal formulations.[5] Ritschl summarizes the significance of this theological failure thus:

> Als nun die Schultradition sich zur Hauptmacht in der lutherischen Kirche erhob, wurde die unvollstaendig ausgepraegte Lehre von der Rechtfertigung aus dem Glauben in dem Maasse unverstaendlich, als man

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[1] Ritschl, R.u.V. I, 127-29. See supra, pp. 74-76 for a full discussion of this issue.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., pp. 129-30.

[4] Supra, p. 75.

[5] Ritschl, R.u.V. I, 130f.

> sie in erster Linie als objective Lehre behandelte, und ihren religioesen Werth von der Anerkennung der Formel abhaengig machte.[1]

This means, in other words, that their systematic inadequacy led the reformers to isolate their insights from the realm of Lebensfuehrung--a betrayal of their own understanding of Christianity, as well as a deviation from what Ritschl considers to be central to the Christian faith.

This failure to elaborate their religious insights with systematic adequacy led also to unfortunate consequences in regard to the reformers' doctrine of regeneration. Luther, Melanchthon and Zwingli all come in for particular mention at this point in Ritschl's criticism. The gist of Ritschl's argument at this point is as follows: By conforming to the Roman theological scheme, the reformers tried to make their doctrine of justification fit into a precise pigeon-hole, in which it dealt chiefly with the easing of the believer's conscience by the communication of God's grace.[2] The doctrine was thus separated almost entirely from regeneration, which is dealt with primarily in terms of the gift of the Holy Spirit as enabling good works.[3] Both justification and regeneration are required by men's religious consciousness, so that man's need for grace and God's demand for good works are both satisfied. However, Ritschl asserts, the fullness of the reformers' thought is not expressed when the two notions are wrenched apart into two isolated doctrines.[4] He writes,

> So lange diese beiden Zweckbeziehungen nicht in Einen Gedanken vereinigt werden, ist die Lehre Luther's und Melanchthon's unvollstaendig, und es fehlt ihr die volle Ueberzeugungskraft gegenueber der roemischen Lehre, in welcher der Begriff der iustificatio direct darauf berechnet ist, dass in der Begruendung der Kraft zu verdienstlichen Werken sowohl

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[1] Ibid., p. 128.

[2] Ibid., pp. 177-78.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Supra, pp. 70-73.

> das Beduerfniss der Menschen, als auch der Anspruch des goettlichen Gesetzes an die Menschen befriedigt werde.[1]

Ritschl's concern, then, is that the fullness and systematic unity of the chief elements of Reformation Christianity were never adequately expressed by the reformers and their orthodox followers, nor were they brought to bear on the theological problems of the time. The inadequacies of conception and formulation were most immediately apparent in the doctrines of justification and regeneration, but they affected other important elements of the Reformation position as well. What Ritschl's criticism here amounts to is ultimately the rejection of an inadequate soteriology that engendered an inadequate ecclesiology.

As to soteriology, Ritschl contends that the confusion concerning the doctrines of justification and regeneration brought uncertainty to the understanding of just how Christ's saving work is appropriated by the believer and at what point the believer is declared righteous. The reformers and their orthodox followers believed on the one hand that justification precedes the bestowal of the spirit, and on the other hand that the faith which justification entails requires the prior possession of the Holy Spirit.[2] The self-contradiction here is obvious. It should be noted that the issue here, as Ritschl sees it, is essentially that of the relation or equilibrium of divine and human factors in the God-man relationship. Ritschl charges that the reformers, and more particularly their orthodox followers were imprecise in expressing this relationship, with the result that on the one hand the divine action preceded the human, while on the other hand the human action was presupposed in order that the divine might be efficacious.[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 178. (Italics mine.) For comments on Zwingli, see pp. 178-79.

[2] Ibid., pp. 185-86.

[3] Ibid.

Ritschl considers that this dilemma in the Reformation formulation of its position was never adequately dealt with. The result is an utter perversion at the level of the relationship between law and gospel. The question here is whether man must possess some rudiment of faith already under the law, if that law is to bring him to the gospel. Ritschl contends that the reformers chose to ignore this rudimentary faith, restricting the discussion of faith to the full justifying faith (fides justificans), in order to accommodate their doctrine to the unlearned masses who could not understand the complexities of this matter.[1] The consequence is that the masses were exhorted to obey the law, God's command, and to fear God--all activities under the law--with no attention at all being given to the explanation of how this obedience was even possible unless it, too, were conditioned by a measure of faith.[2] Ritschl seems to believe that this state of affairs was initiated by Melanchthon and agreed to by Luther simply because the latter reacted against John Agricola's extreme criticism of Melanchthon (Agricola maintained that the law was superfluous).[3] Ritschl deplores the effects of this perversion upon the masses; it led them either to a denial of the law's efficacy, or to hypocritical acts of false penitence. Ritschl summarizes the situation thus:

> Da Luther deshalb nicht umhin konnte, den Agricola misszuverstehen, welcher selbst die Tendenz seiner Gedanken nicht beherrschte, so ist es begreiflich, dass Luther sich in dem Schema der Ableitung der Bekehrung von Gestz und Evangelium nur noch fester setzte, und sich des Gesichtspunktes gaenzlich entschlug, dass doch eine zur Busse erfolgreiche Auffassung des Gesetzes durch einen bestimmten Grad von Heilsglauben bedingt sei, wenn auch das Subject selbst sich dessen ebenso wenig bewusst ist, wie der geheimen zuvorkommenden Gnade Gottes.[4]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 188-89.

[2] Ibid., p. 190.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

It is unfortunate, in Ritschl's opinion, "dass Luther sich in dem Schema der Ableitung der Bekehrung von Gesetz und Evangelium nur noch fester setzte," because it seriously impaired the Reformation understanding of the church. The law does not work upon man in splendid isolation from all previous conditioning of faith, as if he could come to repentance as a solitary individual. Rather the word of God comes to man through the ministerium verbi which is the instrumentality of the church, i.e., the community of believers which is its ground.[1] The dilemma posed by rudimentary and justifying faith can be resolved only by an adequate concept of the church. The door was opened for an unevangelical understanding when the reformers began to look upon their congregations as individuals who needed to be made the object of the word of God, rather than the community which is the ground of the ministry of that word.[2] Furthermore, such a depreciation of the role of the church is a betrayal of the real intention of the reformers.[3]

Ritschl took these systematic theological inadequacies as direct imperatives for his own work. He criticized the reformers for failing to give adequate systematic and scientific expression to their practical religious insights. In his own work, he never tired of emphasizing the precise systematic and scientific method which he had evolved to express what he considered to be the essence of the Christian religion. I cannot document this in detail in this dissertation. I shall, however, indicate certain pertinent lines of argument, which the informed reader can immediately place in context so as to test the validity of my thesis.

In the third volume of Rechtfertigung und Versoehnung, Ritschl makes clear what he understands by "scientific" theology. His train of reasoning

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[1] Ibid., pp. 190-91. See also pp. 176-77. [2] Ibid., p. 190.

[3] Ibid., pp. 176-78. See supra, pp. 71-72.

proceeds along these lines:[1] Theology has the task of describing the action of God in the life of the Christian believer as he lives in the Holy Spirit;[2] this description must be taken from the self-consciousness of the believer as it is caught up in the two-fold activity which takes place in the Holy Spirit (i.e., religious and moral activity); these moral and religious acts and the self-consciousness which accompanies them are not to be equated with the action of God, but they are the inseparable correlates which always accompany that divine action; this relationship is analogous to the relationship that psychology has established between the sensations of noise in the ear and the vibrations in the air which give rise to that noise (the sensations of noise are not to be equated with the vibrations, and the form of each is quite different; but the sensations are inseparable from the vibrations, and they constitute the only means of knowledge that the average man can gain of those vibrations). From this train of reasoning, Ritschl summarizes the definition of scientific theology:

> Aus dieser Grundregel der Psychologie ergiebt sich fuer die wissenschaftliche Theologie die Aufgabe, alles was als Gnadenwirkungen Gottes auf den Christen zu erkennen ist, in den entsprechenden religioesen und sittlichen Acten nachzuweisen, welche durch die Offenbarung im Ganzen und durch die in ihr eingeschlossenen besondern Mittel angeregt werden.[3]

Whether or not Ritschl really achieved this scientific presentation of Christian theology is a question that can hardly be settled decisively to every critic's satisfaction. That this was his intention and that he exerted a great deal of disciplined effort to achieve it can hardly be denied by anyone who has worked through his closely reasoned three volumes on justification and reconciliation. The organization of the third volume itself

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[1]This discussion is to be found in the Introduction to Ritschl, R.u.V. III, 4th ed. (1910). See also Hefner, Lutheran Quarterly, pp. 108-09.

[2]At a later point, I will make clear that this life takes place in the community of believers, in the church.

[3]Ritschl, R.u.V. III, 22.

illustrates the consistency of his endeavor. He works through four general categories--definitions, presuppositions, demonstrations, and religious-moral consequences--all with the purpose of describing the reconciling action of God from the perspective of the religious and moral self-consciousness of the Christian believer.[1]

The foregoing has described Ritschl's understanding of the scientific method appropriate to systematic theology. The systematic character of theology is constituted by the manner in which the material produced by the scientific method is arranged. Ritschl considers this arrangement to be crucial for systematic theology. The arrangement follows from one's understanding of the Christian religion.[2] Ritschl's understanding of Christianity involves his famous ellipse of the religious and the moral, i.e., it proceeds from the God-man relation of reconciliation in which the divine (religious) and human (moral) factors are held in a certain equilibrium.[3]

From this understanding follows the system of theology. Ritschl defines the Christian religion as follows:

> Das Christenthum also ist die monotheistische vollendet geistige und sittliche Religion, welche auf Grund des erloesenden und das Gottesreich gruendenden Lebens ihres Stifters in der Freiheit der Gotteskindschaft besteht, den Antrieb zu dem Handeln aus Liebe in sich schliesst, das auf die sittliche Organisation der Menschheit gerichtet ist, und in der Gotteskindschaft wie in dem Reiche Gottes die Seligkeit begruendet.[4]

From this elliptical view, the following systematic considerations follow (this quotation follows immediately after the definition of Christianity just cited):

> Dieser Begriff ist fuer die systematische Theologie nothwendig, damit der richtig erhobene Stoff der biblischen Vorstellungen auch vollstaendig

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[1] Ibid., pp. v-viii.

[2] Ibid., pp. 8f.

[3] Ibid., p. 1.

[4] Ibid., pp. 13-14.

> verwerthet werde. Die Geschichte der Theologie weist nur zu viele Erscheinungen davon auf, dass man entweder blos eine Erloesungslehre, oder blos eine Sittenlehre zu Stande gebracht hat. Allein es muss auch bemerkt werden, dass nicht durch die Erloesungsidee die Glaubenslehre und durch die Idee des Gottesreiches die Sittenlehre begruendet wird; sondern sofern die systematische Theologie sich in diese beiden Disciplinen theilt, steht jede unter dem constitutiven Einfluss beider Ideen. Die Dogmatik naemlich begreift alle Bedingungen des Christenthums in dem Schema der Bewirkung durch Gott, die Ethik, indem sie diese Erkenntniss voraussetzt, begreift das Gebiet des persoenlichen und gemeinschaftlichen christlichen Lebens in dem Schema der persoenlichen Selbstthaetigkeit. So wie nun die Offenbarung Gottes nicht blos auf den Zweck der Erloesung, sondern auch auf den Endzweck des Reiches Gottes sich richtet, welchen er in Gemeinschaft mit dem Erloesten realisirt, so kann die Dogmatik dieses Richtpunktes nicht entbehren. Und so wie die geistige Selbstthaetigkeit der zum Reiche Gottes Berufenen und Erloesten nicht blos in ihren sittlichen Leistungen an den Anderen erscheint, sondern auch in den eigenthuemlichen Functionen der Gotteskindschaft, so wird die Ethik auch durch die Erloesungsidee bestimmt.[1]

One could summarize this lengthy documentation by saying that, for Ritschl, a scientific and systematic theology was one which proceeded consistently and completely from that which is central to the Christian faith. Ritschl understood the God-man relation which emerged from reconciliation to be this center, and he made it central to his own work. As he writes in the very first paragraph of R.u.V. III,

> . . . kam es nach dem evangelisch-kirchlichen Grundsatze der Theologie darauf an, die urspruenglichen Auffassungen des in jenen Begriffen [i.e., the concepts of Rechtfertigung and Versoehnung] ausgedrueckten religioesen Verhaeltnisses der Christen zu Gott zu ermitteln.[2]

Because Ritschl saw this center in a God-man relation in which there were two factors, one of which corresponded to justification (i.e., the religious or divine) and the other to regeneration (i.e., the moral or human); and inasmuch as he insisted on a reciprocity between the two,[3] at least for the purposes of systematic theological methodology; therefore, he built into

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[1] Ibid., p. 14.

[2] Ibid., p. 1. (Italics mine.) See also supra, p. 34.

[3] See note one, this page.

his very method a concern for both justification and regeneration which would seem to be able to obviate the incompleteness which he found in the reformers at this point. His definition of scientific theology also includes this safeguard.[1]

Furthermore, by interrelating the religious and the moral (justification and regeneration) so intimately as one total human response to one engendering act of God,[2] Ritschl seems to be laying the groundwork for a formulation of soteriology which obviates precisely the criticisms which he had levelled at the reformers.

I have left one affirmation unmentioned which Ritschl emphasized vigorously as a presupposition for scientific and systematic theology as he understood it. This presupposition has to do with Ritschl's conviction that the material of systematic theology is <u>the consciousness of the church</u>.[3] Theology has to describe the gracious action of God as it is mirrored in the religious-moral consciousness of the Christian believer, but that believer exists only in the community which has been founded by Christ and which accepts him as the forgiver of its sins.[4] Ritschl summarizes this opinion in emphatic tones:

> Man kann auch Gott, die Suende, die Bekehrung, das ewige Leben im Sinne des Christenthums nur erkennen und verstehen, sofern man mit Bewusstsein und Absicht sich in die Gemeinde, die Christus gestiftet, einrechnet, Diesen Standpunkt einzunehmen ist der Theologie geboten, und nur so kann es gelingen ein System der Theologie auszufuehren, welches diesen Namen verdient.[5]

Thus, once again, whether he has been successful or not in his achievement, it is clear that Ritschl has shaped his theological work in such a way as

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[1] <u>Supra</u>, note three, p. 101.
[2] <u>Supra</u>, note three, p. 101; note one, p.103.
[3] Ritschl, <u>R.u.V.</u> III, p. 3.
[4] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 2.
[5] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 4.

to avoid precisely the weaknesses which he saw in Reformation formulations. He harbors the hope not only that he can fill the lacunae of the Reformation theologies, but that he can also present a formulation which will oppose the Roman Catholics, as well as the Pietists and the "exclusivistic" or "confessional" Lutherans.

In these last few pages, the reader will recognize that I have had to sketch very briefly a total scheme for the interpretation of Ritschl's work. I cannot hope to document it carefully here. But it should be clear that its general lines of interpretation follow with almost complete consistency from the historical work of Ritschl's, which I have documented in detail.

There remains a third set of considerations, on the basis of which Ritschl levelled criticism at the reformers. These are religious considerations. The gist of Ritschl's concern here is that the reformers allowed the pressures towards Schulmaessigkeit to draw them away from the genius of Reformation (and apostolic) Christianity, to which the implications of sola fide lead directly, namely, of Christianity as Lebensideal or Lebensfuehrung. This criticism is directly related to what Ritschl considered to be the perversion of Lutheranism, so this discussion is an elaboration upon the analysis documented above.[1] There, in the context of his interpretation of the historical development from Luther to the Lutheran church, we considered the historical essay, "Die Entstehung der lutherischen Kirche." Here, we turn attention to the argument of Geschichte des Pietismus, where Ritschl is chiefly concerned to illumine the essence of Reformation Christianity in distinction from Roman Catholicism and Pietism; consequently,

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[1] Supra, pp. 90-91.

this argument is less historical and somewhat more systematic than the argument of the earlier essay.

Ritschl is obviously concerned with what he considers to be Protestantism's (i.e., Lutheranism's and Calvinism's) self-contradictory existence, in which it claims to be the Catholic church, but behaves as one party or school within the church. He considers this to constitute an occasion for the need of continuing reform;[1] indeed, it was this perversion which provided the immediate stimulus for the rise of Pietism within the Lutheran church.[2] This Schulmaessigkeit is a direct holdover from the Medieval heritage, in which differing interests within the church did often identify themselves as schools within the one church, presenting their insights in the form of theological propositions, and resolving disagreements through theological discussion.[3] The Lutherans and Calvinists behave (not only in regard to each other, but even more within themselves) as ecclesiastical parties in their waging sharp polemical discussion, with the concomitant emphasis on reine Lehre, pura doctrina, and (in the case of the former group) on the Confessio Augustana as the doctrina evangelii.[4] Ritschl even undertakes a bit of psychological analysis and lays this Schulmaessigkeit to the fact that "die Menschen des Reformationsjahrhunderts mit einer eigenthuemlich beschraenkten geistigen Disposition behaftet gewesen waeren."[5] By this, he means their "Unbekanntschaft mit dem Gefuehl im Allgemeinen und mit seinen Bedingungen und Beziehungen im geistigen Leben."[6] This narrowness of disposition made it impossible for Reformation theologians to rise above and reject the tendencies towards Schulmaessigkeit.

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[1] Ritschl, Pietismus, I, 81.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid., pp. 83-84.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid., p. 92.
[6] Ibid.

This narrowness of spirit rendered these theologians apparently incapable of understanding that the differences which separated the Romans (and the Pietists) from Reformation Christianity were not matters of theology, but rather matters of Lebensidealen; the two groups opposed each other with total perspectives of Christian piety and existence, total Weltanschauungen.[1]

This Schulmaessigkeit, which alienated Reformation Christianity from its true base in Lebensideal or Lebensfuehrung, tended to vitiate the presentation of the Reformation case. Ritschl considers it to be one of the chief causes for the systematic inadequacies of the Reformation theologians.[2] These theologians were separated from the Totalanschauung or Lebensideal which really lay at the base of their position, and as a result, in typical school fashion, they argued on isolated points, rather than elaborating the systematic whole which proceeded from their Lebensideal.[3] This describes exactly the weakness into which Luther, Melanchthon and Zwingli fell when elaborating their understanding of justification.[4]

The greatest blow of all, however, is the dissolution and misunderstanding to which the Reformation Totalanschauung was subjected by this rising Schulmaessigkeit, which was engendering its own Verstandeschristenthum.[5] Soteriologically, this meant that the perversions of Catholicism were reintroduced, inasmuch as a new legalistic fides implicita was set up to replace the Catholic counterpart. This new fides implicita was marked by the confidence in pure doctrine. It became no longer necessary to believe that God's reconciling action was indeed directed to one's own personal

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[1] Ibid., pp. 83-84.

[2] Supra, pp. 94-104.

[3] Ritschl, Pietismus, I, 85.

[4] Supra, p. 97.

[5] Ritschl, Pietismus, I, 92ff.

redemption; rather, it was enough to hold to the doctrine of this grace.[1]

Ritschl summarizes the tendency thus:

> Das persoenliche Selbstgefuehl des Gottvertrauens, welches die Probe der Versoehnung durch Christus ist, besass man nicht in der deutlichen Erkenntniss seiner Art und seines Werthes, sondern nur eingewickelt in dem Hochgefuehl des Besitzes der reinen Lehre, oder im bessern Falle als einen Anhang zu der letztern.[2]

Ecclesiologically, there was also a regression to Catholic perversions. The symbol of this regression, in Ritschl's opinion, was the Lutheran confessional, which he considered to be only a modification of the Roman sacrament of penance, which in turn was merely an attempt to press the legalistic claims of the moral and religious authoritarianism of the church.[3] The consequence was a depreciation of the quality of religious life and an emphasis on the legal adherence to the authority of the church which could render men meritorious before God.[4]

This perversion occasioned by Schulmaessigkeit Ritschl calls "die verstandesmaessige Einschraenkung des Protestantismus."[5] This may be the greatest perversion of all, in his mind. Of this phenomenon, more than any other, he says repeatedly, that it puts the Reformation church in need of continuing Reformation.[6]

Ritschl is not wholly unappreciative of the men who were responsible for this perversion of Schulmaessigkeit. Indeed, he believes that it was inevitable in its time. It served the purpose in the sixteenth century of preserving the Reformation insights against total eradication by the action

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[1] Ibid., pp. 91-92. See also Ritschl's short monograph, Fides Implicita: Eine Untersuchung ueber Koehlerglauben, Wissen und Glauben, Glauben und Kirche (Bonn: Adolph Marcus, 1890), esp. pp. 68ff.

[2] Ibid., p. 93. [3] Ibid., p. 95. [4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., p. 93. [6] Ibid., pp. 92, 95, 96.

of the Roman church.[1] Here Ritschl develops his theory as to the limitations of this usefulness. He likens the forms of this Schulmaessigkeit to Keimblaettchen, i.e., the protective leaves of a young plant, which are soon outgrown and discarded.[2] According to Ritschl's theory of organic cultural development, such reactionary forms are always needed to ease the transition between epochs.[3] The unfortunate thing, however, is the inability to recognize the transience of these forms, and the efforts to push for their maintenance when they are in fact outmoded.[4] The rise of these forms under Luther and Melanchthon was due to the necessity of circumstances; their maintenance, however, reflects a profound misunderstanding of the God-man relation, of the proper relationship of the religious and the moral, justification and regeneration.

Once again, as in the case of his historical and systematic theological criticisms, Ritschl accepted the unfortunate religious tendencies of the reformers and their followers as imperatives for his own theological work. In the first place, he sought to eschew any "party" label or activity. Although he was apparently concerned to establish a Ritschlian "school,"[5] an enterprise in which he was quite successful, he had no intention that his work should portray a version of Christianity whose application extended no further than the academic environment in which he waged his battles. As he writes in the preface to the first edition of the third volume of Rechtfertigung und Versoehnung,

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[1] Ibid., pp. 93ff.

[2] Ibid., p. 94.

[3] Ibid., pp. 94-95.

[4] Ibid., pp. 95-96.

[5] See the comments by Wilhelm Herrmann in Festgabe . . . fuer Harnack (Tuebingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1921), pp. 405-406. But see Karl Heussi's objection in Kompendium der Kirchengeschichte (Tuebingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1957), p. 482.

> Denn einmal ist mir mein Weg und sein Ziel durch dasjenige gewiesen, was ich als den biblischen Stoff der Lehre im zweiten Band dargelegt habe, uebrigens aber meine ich schol im ersten Bande es deutlich genug gemacht zu haben, dass meine Theologie in dem Fachwerk der bisher ueblichen Parteieintheilungen keinen Pltaz findet.[1]

The practical success of Ritschl's attempt to avoid the party-spirit of his day is attested to by a contemporary historian, who writes, ". . . he took much of the wind from the sails of the mediationist school and the right wing; the mediationists, in fact, largely abdicated to him."[2]

In both his historical and constructive work, Ritschl expends much effort to emphasize that Christianity represents above all a Lebensfuehrung. This dissertation has indicated that at every important juncture in his historical investigations, Ritschl criticized efforts to remove the Christian faith from the practical realities of life. He distinguishes what he considers to be authentic Christianity from all its deviations--ancient Catholicism, Medieval Catholicism, Lutheranism, and Pietism--on the basis of its distinctive Lebensfuehrung. Indeed, it is clear that this understanding of Christianity as Lebensfuehrung is the category by means of which Ritschl locates and elaborates the historical continuity with which he is preoccupied. In his systematic work, also, Ritschl attempts to make this notion of Christianity as Lebensfuehrung pivotal for theological method. The following passage is worth quoting for the clarity in which it presents this concern of Ritschl's.

> . . . vielmehr hat man [i.e., the theologian] das Leben im heiligen Geiste darin nachzuweisen, dass die Glaeubigen die Gnadengaben Gottes erkennen (I Kor. 2, 12), dass sie Gott als ihren Vater anrufen (Roem. 8, 15), dass sie in Liebe und Freudigkeit, in Sanftmuth und Selbstzucht

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[1]Ritschl, R.u.V. III, iii. (Italics mine.)

[2]James Hastings Nichols, History of Christianity, 1650-1950 (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1956), p. 285.

> handeln (Gal. 5,22), dass sie sich hauptsaechlich vor Parteisucht hueten, hingegen den Gemeinsinn ueben (I Kor. 3, 1-4). In diesen Saetzen wird der heilige Geist nicht geleugnet, sondern anerkannt und begriffen. Diese Verfahrungsweise ist auch nichts Neues; vielmehr ist sie von Schleiermacher geuebt worden, und die Deutung der Rechtfertigung aus dem Glauben in der Apologie der Augsburgischen Confession bewegt sich in diesem Schema. Soll das Christenthum praktisch verstaendlich sein, so kann nur diese Methode befolgt werden. Denn die Formeln ueber die individuelle Heilsordnung, welche auf der andern Seite erreicht und dem Glauben vorgeschrieben werden, ohne dass ihre praktische Beziehung und Erprobung direct angeknuepft wuerde, machen das Christenthum unverstaendlich.[1]

Finally, in regard to ecclesiology, I may repeat what I have said in regard to Ritschl's understanding of Christianity as Lebensfuehrung, immediately above. It is clear that Ritschl does not acknowledge pura doctrina as the chief mark of the church, or as the chief vehicle of unity or disunity within it. On the contrary, he considers several marks more important, including prayer.[2] The chief mark, however, which distinguishes the church is its participation--first as a corporate entity, secondly as a group of individuals--in the reconciliation wrought by Christ.[3]

It appears legitimate to conclude from this survey of Ritschl's concern for continuing Reformation that what is at stake is the conception and establishment of a certain historical continuity. This is the continuity of Christianity understood as a certain notion of Lebensfuehrung (with all that term implies concerning the God-man relation, the equilibrium of divine and human factors within that relation, and the relation between justification and regeneration). In elaborating a notion of continuing Reformation, Ritschl seeks to establish this continuity of Christianity from the apostolic era, through the best Medieval tradition, to the Reformation and thence to

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[1]Ritschl, R.u.V. III, 22-23. (Italics mine.)

[2]Ibid., p. 608.

[3]Ibid., Section 56.

his own theological formulations, in a way that not only secures his own position within that continuity, but that also disqualifies those who oppose this thread of the historical movement.

Ritschl's concern for continuing Reformation also clarifies the fact that the continuity with which he is preoccupied is not simply an accumulation of past events, but rather a bearer of qualitative meaning. Ritschl has differentiated several epochs within this past tradition, and, with the help of the category of Lebensfuehrung, he has clarified their interrelations so as to give a qualitative content to the tradition in which he participates. In this dissertation, three sets of transition, with their corresponding epochs, have come under discussion. In Chapter I, attention was given to Ritschl's differentiation between apostolic and third-century Catholic Christianity, with the transition between located in the emerging old Catholic church. In this chapter, the discussion has centered on the transition from Medieval Catholicism to the Reformation and from the Reformation to the Lutheran church. In spite of the sheer physical continuity which Ritschl affirms between these epochs, it is clear that the Christianity of the third through the sixteenth centuries, together with the Lutheran orthodox period, are judged negatively in respect to apostolic and Reformation Christianity. This negative evaluation implies no suprahistorical metaphysical category of a "fall" from apostolic or Reformation Christianity, but it does denote a definite turning away or deviation. On the other hand, a new resurgence of the apostolic faith is asserted in the Reformation epoch, as well as in Ritschl's own understanding of the Christian revelation. The picture of the continuous tradition takes on the following configuration: the constitutive and normative revelation of God's reconciling action is located in the initial epoch of Christianity, which is dominated by Jesus Christ

and the apostolic testimony to him. Cultural and political pressures rendered succeeding epochs incapable of maintaining this testimony in its clarity and purity; the testimony of these Catholic centuries was not indeed wholly perverse, and the apostolic faith was never absent from it; but, publicly at least, its witness represents a confused understanding of God's reconciling activity on man's behalf. The significance of the Reformation lies in its ability to maintain the physical continuity with its immediate past, holding fast to the community of Medieval Catholicism and laying hold of its minimal witness to the apostolic faith, while at the same time freeing itself from the confusions of this immediate past and laying hold of the witness of its ultimate past, the age of Christ and his apostles. The successors to the reformers found themselves beset by cultural and political pressures which rendered them as inept as the Catholic successors to the apostles in the attempt to preserve an adequate testimony to God's gracious work among men. The Lutherans, therefore, were incapable of laying hold of either their immediate or ultimate past, in spite of their physical continuity with this past and in spite of their honorable intentions.

Ritschl's own continuing Reformation finds its task to be the same as Luther's, namely, that of retaining its continuity with the historical community and its intentions, while at the same time setting aside the perversions of its Lutheran-Pietist representatives and laying hold of the ultimate past which stands as judge and inspiration to every epoch of the Christian tradition. Attention was called above to Ritschl's two-pronged approach to the historical continuity of the Christian tradition.[1] The significance of this approach can now be seen more clearly. By his affirmation of the sheer physical continuity of the successive epochs of Christian history--

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[1] Supra, p. 63.

rooted in the physical unity of the historical continuum--he affirms his unity with the community which is concerned in one way or another to preserve the authentic testimony to God's gracious action for man. But by the application of his category of historical judgment--the Lebensfuehrung--he is able to assert that this tradition and its continuity is more than the simple accumulation of years and events. Rather, it is a continuity of man's encounter with and report concerning God's revelation; moreover, the report which is engendered by the encounter of certain epochs is qualitatively more significant than the testimony of other epochs. Those epochs which have articulated a witness which is most faithful to the action of God as proclaimed in the initial events of the Christian tradition--i.e., in the apostolic era--play a normative role in themselves, a guide to later generations who encounter the same divine revelation. In their impact on later generations, these epochs overshadow those whose witness is less adequate, even though they never displace those lesser epochs completely.

In the light of these considerations it becomes clear that although Ritschl takes great pains to establish the physical continuity and identity of the various epochs which constitute the history of the Christian community, he is much more concerned to draw attention to what he considers to be the tradition of the most faithful witness of the community, as it centers in the tradition of Christ, Paul, Luther, and Albrecht Ritschl. This is the background against which Ritschl's commitment to the Reformation takes on its real significance.[1] "Back to the Bible through the Reformation" expresses an authentic Ritschlian concern, not because Bible and Reformation

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[1]Supra, pp. 36ff., where Baur's position is contrasted to Ritschl's. The differences in Baur's axiological category (i.e., Geist) made it possible for him to approach each epoch of the tradition more positively than Ritschl could.

are ends in themselves,[1] but rather because they represent epochs whose witness to God's revelation judges and inspires the faith and theology of all epochs and of all men within that tradition. The position set forth in this dissertation holds that this oft-quoted aphorism represents Ritschl's concern for and evaluation of the historical continuity in which he participated and which shaped his work.

The notion of continuing Reformation has also dealt persistently with soteriology and ecclesiology. Ritschl's soteriological concern has been to establish an understanding of Christian faith as a certain Lebensfuehrung over an understanding of intellectualistic Verstandeschristenthum. Parallel to this distinction, he has attempted to assert the preeminence of the divine reconciling action over the full moral response it engenders, against those who insist that this moral activity has some legal claim in itself upon God's grace. Once again, parallel to these distinctions, he has emphasized a notion of gratia justificans over a notion of gratia cooperans.

Ritschl's ecclesiological concern has been to undermine a position which is perversely individualistic, and which therefore cannot account for man's coming to faith and his possession of the Holy Spirit. Conversely, he seeks to establish an understanding of the church as the ground of the ministry of the word, which is its instrumentality for opening the possibility of grace, justification, to those in its midst. Concomitant to this concern has been the attempt to establish the pre-eminence of the concept of the church as the communion of saints, distinguished by its participation

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[1]So Ritschl, in R.u.V. II, asserts the primacy of the biblical witness, not on the basis of a theory of inspiration, but rather on the grounds that it represents the initial, or original, epoch in the Christian religion. R.u.V. II, 13ff.

in God's reconciling act in Christ, over an understanding which gives priority to the church as an empirical, legal entity, and which assumes that its legal forms can somehow domesticate the gracious action of God.

More important for this dissertation, however, is the fact that this critique and call for a continuing Reformation constitute a precise programme which Ritschl adopted so meticulously in his own theological work. This underlines the fact that his constructive work does not find its elaboration except in the framework of historical judgments and commitments; indeed, it is shaped by them. There is no reason why Ritschl could not have cultivated the theological insights which he considered to be the continuation of the Reformation and simply elaborated them constructively quite apart from any historical investigations and demonstrations. The fact is that he devoted most of the years of his life, and many volumes, to the historical study which served to clarify his knowledge of these insights, justify them, and emphasize their significance. It is for this reason that in this concern for continuing Reformation, our thesis attains its clearest statement, namely, that his preoccupation with historical continuity shapes Ritschl's theological achievement. The next chapter turns to an assessment of the significance of Ritschl's preoccupation with this historical continuity.[1]

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[1]Even though I have referred to Ritschl's polemic against Pietism and confessional Lutheranism, I have not discussed it in detail. Such discussions are omitted because they would introduce no factors in Ritschl's argument which have not already been discussed. Ritschl attacks the Pietists on the grounds that they embrace a Medieval Catholic Lebensfuehrung. The confessionalists come under censure for dogmatic rationalism.

CHAPTER III

THE PROBLEM OF CONTINUITY IN SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY: AN EVALUATION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this chapter is threefold. I shall bring together the results of the foregoing discussion into summary conclusions. These conclusions will then be compared briefly with the results that other students of Ritschl have reached, as represented in the corpus of critical literature dealing with his theological work. Finally, I shall enter into a thoroughgoing evaluation of Ritschl's work, based upon the interpretation which is supported by the first two chapters of this dissertation.

Summary

The discussion in the first two chapters has illumined three judgments in particular which can be asserted in regard to Ritschl's theological career. The first of these is that the preoccupation with historical continuity played a considerable role in Ritschl's thought. This is clear from the simple fact that he devoted a great many years and not a few works to the documentation of a certain thread of historical continuity and its significance. The significance of this preoccupation for Ritschl's work will be discussed below.

The second judgment has to do with the substance of this continuity. The thread of historical continuity that Ritschl expended so much effort to document consists of a continuous Christian understanding of the

Christian revelation as pertaining to a Lebensfuehrung which emerges from participation in a certain relationship with God; in this relationship, God's prevenient reconciling activity in Christ engenders a human moral response rooted in utter confidence in God's gracious providence--even in the midst of this life's greatest woes.

The third and most substantial judgment is that Ritschl's concern with this historical continuity is not one of detachment or complete objectivity. On the contrary, he participated in this continuity as a reality in his theological career, and he felt the full force of its impact. He participated in the reality of this continuity as imperative and as indicative. Under the impact of this continuity as imperative, he devoted his energies to the formulation of a category within which this historical continuity is to be located, a category which can serve as the bearer and the expression of that continuity. It has been noted how, from his youthful days, Ritschl employed such a category, steadily growing in his understanding of it and in his ability to articulate it clearly. This category is that of Lebensfuehrung or Lebensideal, as described above. Under the force of this continuity as imperative, Ritschl also expended much effort in demonstrating that this historical continuity, conceived in terms of this Lebensfuehrung, did in fact exist. We have seen the meticulous care with which he traces the existence of this continuity from the New Testament literature through ancient Catholicism, Medieval Christianity, the Reformation, and post-Reformation developments. This demonstration also involved Ritschl in polemical activity, in which he had to document the deviation of all the manifestations of Christianity other than those which supported his category of Lebensfuehrung. We have followed his polemic against ancient Catholicism, much of Medieval Roman Catholicism and orthodox Lutheranism.

Attention has been called to his polemic against Pietism and nineteenth century German Lutheran confessionalism.

Ritschl also participated in the reality of this continuity as indicative. Under the impact of the indicative, his thought was informed by the heritage which is borne along by this continuity--informed as to content and strategy. Ritschl incorporated the results of his historical investigations and polemics (activities under the impact of the community as imperative) into his own constructive theological work. He incorporated these results so as to carry on the thrust of the continuity while at the same time avoiding the perversions which the necessity of historical circumstances had from time to time occasioned in the career of this continuity of Lebensfuehrung. Thus, the continuity provided content for his theological thought. This participation under the impact of the continuity as indicative impelled Ritschl to follow a strategy in his career which included the historical demonstration of the reality of the continuity, the polemic against all who rejected or misunderstood its heritage, and the positive enunciation of its content to his own age.

All of this, I believe, may fairly and legitimately be concluded from the discussion in the first two chapters of this dissertation, together with the sketch of the genesis of Ritschl's preoccupations under Ferdinand Christian Baur and the subsequent break with him.

If the foregoing be an accurate assessment of the argument so far, then it may be concluded that Ritschl's theological achievement was indeed shaped by his preoccupation with historical continuity. Another way of expressing this thesis is to say that Ritschl's theological achievement is to be understood in terms of his interpretation of history. Or, that his theological work was engendered by his historical judgments and commitments.

The activities which have been outlined in Ritschl's career as emerging from his participating in the reality of the historical continuity as imperative and indicative are in a sense activities determined by historical judgments and commitments. Each of these activities is beholden to historical judgments and commitments either as a propadeutic for systematic understanding and elaboration; or as a source for the substance of that systematic elaboration; or as an end in itself, to serve the purpose of demonstration or polemical defense. This suggests a comprehensive scheme for interpreting Ritschl's work: The career of his theological work took the shape it did because he understood history as he did, because he was committed to that understanding, and because he accepted the responsibility for the theological activity which commitment to such an understanding of history would impel. This activity consists almost wholly of documentation (including historical investigation and biblical exegesis), defense, and proclamation (or even propagandizing) of the certain historical continuity and its heritage. His understanding of history demanded that this documentation be undertaken; this documentation led naturally to the polemic against hostile groups; documentation and defense immediately revealed the lines which systematic elaboration would have to take if Ritschl's understanding of history were to remain a live option in his own day (i.e., if the historical continuity were to be extended to his own age). In terms of his total published output, approximately eighty per cent of his effort was expended in documentation and defense, with the remaining twenty per cent devoted to proclamation. This dissertation argues that this scheme for interpreting Ritschl's work takes into account more adequately than any other scheme yet presented the structure and sequence of his own theological output, as well as his own statements concerning his task as a

theologian of the ongoing Reformation. At this point we turn briefly to a discussion of other schemes which are presented in the secondary literature for the interpretation of Ritschl's theology.

The secondary literature on Ritschl is considerable, but by no means vast. Professor Gøsta Høk's exhaustive bibliography of this literature fills seventeen medium-sized pages.[1] This bibliography includes survey works in which only a few pages are devoted to Ritschl. A count reveals that only one-fourth of the works in Høk's listing appeared after 1900. So far as I have been able to survey this literature, there is no single work on Ritschl which deals with that aspect of the Ritschlian corpus which I have discussed in this dissertation. None of these works, so far as my acquaintance with them reaches, gives more than a passing reference to the role of history in Ritschl's theological work.[2] Rather, the secondary literature deals exclusively with Ritschl's systematic work, i.e., with Rechtfertigung und Versoehnung, III, Theologie und Metaphysik, Die christliche Vollkommenheit, and Unterricht in der christlichen Religion. This literature approaches Ritschl from the point of view of his philosophical- and psychological-theological antecedents or from the perspective of a

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[1]Gøsta Høk, Die elliptische Theologie Albrecht Ritschls (Uppsala Universitets Arsskrift, 1942), pp. xviii-xxxiv.

[2]I have discovered three exceptions to this rule: André Jundt, Le Role de la métaphysique et de l'histoire dans la dogmatique protestante moderne: Essai sur les principes de l'école de Ritschl (Montbéliard: Société anonyme d'imprimerie Montbéliardaise, 1920); Robert Mackintosh, Albrecht Ritschl and His School (London: Chapman and Hall, Ltd., 1915); Albert Swing, The Theology of Albrecht Ritschl (London and Bombay: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1901). But none of these works deals seriously with the significance of history in Ritschl's theology. Jundt describes Ritschl's historical work briefly, but chiefly in respect to the role which the historical Jesus plays in his work (see pp. 44-46). Mackintosh surveys Ritschl's historical output in more detail than any other commentator, but he assesses it as a passing phase of Ritschl's career, rather than as a constitutive element of his theology. Swing considers the historical figures from which Ritschl borrowed important ideas or methods; history is thus only a sort of proof-text for Ritschl's constructive work.

single doctrine or group of doctrines which he discussed. Certain of the works do indeed acknowledge that Ritschl was an historian, even that historical work was one of his dominant concerns.[1] But they either dismiss this historical work as an episode,[2] or fail to probe into the significance of this historical concern for Ritschl's entire career, particularly for his systematic theological work.

In the light of the character of this secondary literature, it is not particularly relevant or appropriate to argue with the specific interpretation which the critics offer of Ritschl's work; rather, it seems necessary to argue with the approach which they employ and to suggest the relation (and validity) of the approach set forth in this dissertation, over against theirs.

There is one fundamental question that must be put to the researchers who have attempted to interpret Ritschl's work without taking his historical concern and its significance into account: By choosing to ignore a segment of his work which is unquestionably so large and which was evidently so important in his own mind, how can these interpretations presume to provide a comprehensive understanding of the man's theological work and career? Although the significance of the various factors which make up Ritschl's work cannot be assessed by merely quantitative considerations, it appears to be unwise to interpret a man's work on the basis of only one-fifth of his published output. Even if the unpublished dogmatic and ethical materials, to which Professor Høk refers, are considered, the prevailing interpretations plainly ignore at least two-thirds of Ritschl's work.

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[1]Barth, p. 601. H. R. Mackintosh, Types of Modern Theology (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, n.d.), p. 139.

[2]Barth, p. 601.

More importantly, these critical interpretations fail to take into account the explicit interrelation of historical commitments and constructive intention that has been illumined above in connection with the notion of continuing Reformation.[1] Thus, for example, such significant students as Otto Pfleiderer and Gøsta Høk discuss Ritschl's scientific theology solely from the perspective of its philosophical and philosophical-theological implications.[2] But they give no attention whatsoever to the historical judgments and commitments which may very well have impelled Ritschl's initial concern for scientific method in theology.[3] This indifference towards the impact of historical considerations in Ritschl's work becomes even more unsatisfactory when the critics claim to be making analyses of a genetic nature. So, Professor Høk (whose work is certainly one of the most responsible and impressive in this area) quite correctly isolates the elliptical concept of the God-man relation, with its distinctive interrelation of divine (religious) and human (ethical) factors, as the central category in Ritschl's theology. But he claims to have elucidated the genesis of this category, and Ritschl's systematic elaboration of it, on philosophical and philosophical-theological grounds alone.[4] Thus, Professor Høk completely overlooks the fact that (as the two previous chapters have indicated) Ritschl himself came upon this category in his encounter with the Christian tradition. And the biblical-historical witness to this God-man relation was fully as important for Ritschl's systematic elaboration of it as the

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[1]Karl Barth, Robert Mackintosh, and H. R. Mackintosh mention this interrelation, but they make nothing of it.

[2]Otto Pfleiderer, Die Ritschl'sche Theologie kritisch beleuchtet (Braunschweig, 1891), pp. 1ff. and passim. See also Høk, Chapter VII.

[3]Supra, pp. 101f.

[4]Høk, e.g., Chapter I, pp. 174-76, 323-344.

philosophical and philosophical-theological tradition was.[1] Such an interpretation fails to take into account the fact that Ritschl first wrestled with historical and theological issues, that he continued to pursue these issues until he died,[2] and that he himself considered this preoccupation to be integral to his vocation as a theologian.[3] Karl Barth's assignment of determinative force to cultural factors in Ritschl's theology falls under the same critique.[4]

Several of the critical studies of Ritschl deserve careful attention and even incorporation into our overall scheme for interpreting Ritschl. But they must be questioned in regard to their validity as comprehensive and genetic interpretations because they leave so much of the man's work unaccounted for. On the other hand, the insights achieved by these studies can easily be incorporated into the scheme elaborated above.[5] This scheme suggests that Ritschl's theological work is to be understood as proceeding from his sense of responsibility for carrying out the theological activity which is entailed by his commitment to a certain understanding of history. This activity included the documentation, defense, and proclamation of a certain historical continuity and its heritage. The psychological, philosophical, and philosophical-theological factors which the secondary literature has illumined can easily be subsumed under the proclamatory activity

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[1]Høk himself indexes only three references to the historical works in his study. His discussion of Ritschl's Geschichtsauffassung (pp. 293-316) is wholly metaphysical and psychological in character.

[2]See the list of his lectures and writings in O. Ritschl, II, 526-535.

[3]Supra, pp. 25f.

[4]Barth, pp. 598-600.

[5]Supra, p. 120.

in which Ritschl engaged. When he turned from documentation to the systematic elaboration of the Christian faith understood in terms of his category of Lebensfuehrung, he utilized (consciously and unconsciously) every resource which was available.[1] This included the Kantianism of his geistige Welt, the logical treatises of Trendelenberg, the philosophy of his colleague Hermann Lotze, as well as other factors. The utilization of these factors must be recognized, but they must not blind the student to the fact that Ritschl was a theologian of the Christian tradition (as he understood it), and that he labored under the impact of this tradition. The secondary literature of the Ritschl scholars has not, to this date, made this clear. This dissertation cannot discuss the psychological, philosophical, and philosophical-theological factors in Ritschl's theology, on which these scholars have concentrated. Its thesis aims at illumining, rather, the role of historical factors. But it should be clear that it has accounted for the role and importance of these non-historical factors by incorporating them within a more comprehensive scheme. On the other hand, the scholars who have concentrated their attention primarily on these non-historical factors have not accounted for the four-fifths of the Ritschlian corpus to which we have turned our attention, nor to the impact which this four-fifths has had on the one-fifth that does come within their purview.

This emphasis on the system-shaping force of historical factors in Ritschl's theology should not blind one to the power of his constructive insights. Ritschl's constructive thrust was extraordinarily strong. This constructive thrust is difficult, if not impossible, to analyze into its

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[1]This judgment finds general support in the remarks of Georg Wobbermin, in Schleiermacher und Ritschl in ihrer Bedeutung fuer die heutige theologische Lage und Aufgabe (Tuebingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1927), pp. 17-18.

components, but it is omnipresent in his works. Its provenance is equally difficult to trace.[1] It is clear that Ritschl brought these constructive insights to his historical perspective, even as the insights grew out of this perspective. This constructive thrust provided the drive within his historical stance. These constructive factors led to the formulation of the category of Lebensideal or Lebensfuehrung. This category gave purpose and point to Ritschl's historical investigations; without it he could never have undertaken these investigations, nor could he have dealt with the historical problem of continuity. This constructive category supplies what he considers to be the meaning of history. It compels him to his decisive interpretations of the "deviation" of the old Catholic church, to the repudiation of Pietism and confessional Lutheranism. This constructive thrust also served to limit drastically the breadth and objectivity of Ritschl's historical understanding.[2] Indeed, most of his inadequacies as an historian are traceable to the peculiar force which this constructive thrust exerted on him.[3]

This analysis of Ritschl, therefore, does by no means intend to overlook or even to depreciate his powerful propensity towards construction in theology. It does mean to suggest that Ritschl's historical judgments and commitments seem to determine almost exclusively the manner in which he can utilize his constructive insights. There appear to be only four paths taken by Ritschl for utilizing his own constructive insights: (a) he located and amplified his constructive thought within the historical

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[1]Otto Ritschl, I, 243-44.

[2]For a fuller discussion of this point, see infra, pp. 139ff.

[3]See previous note.

tradition of Christianity;[1] (b) he demonstrated its consonance with biblical-apostolic-Reformation Christianity; (c) he used it as a polemical tool against Catholics, Anabaptists, Pietists, and confessional Lutherans; (d) he systematized it in terms of the traditional theological materials.[2] Careful examination reveals no constructive utterance by Ritschl which falls outside these four areas. The conclusion seems to be that his constructive thought gives point to his theological work, but that Ritschl found it impossible to express this thought except as embodied in the material of his historical investigations.

Another way of stating this same point is to speak of the service which history and historical investigation performed in respect to Ritschl's constructive insight, resp. his notion of Lebensfuehrung. Or, this could be subsumed under the rubric of Ritschl's use of history. This use of history can be summarized as follows:

(a) History serves as a principle of knowledge. Without history, in the form of the Bible, early Christianity, and the Reformation, Ritschl would not know what the constitutive factors of this Lebensfuehrung really were.

(b) History serves as a means of elaboration. Ritschl's historical works and, even more, the extensive historical excursuses in the systematic

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[1]Even a work which is apparently as "constructive" as his Theologie und Metaphysik (1881) can be located plausibly under this rubric, inasmuch as approximately one-half of the work deals, either analytically or polemically, with traditional historical materials.

[2]The so-called "systematic" works--R.u.V. III, Unterricht, and Vollkommenheit--work themselves out against the traditional theological materials much more than they do against philosophical materials. R.u.V. III, especially abounds in historical excursuses which are often ignored by those who are more interested in Ritschl's "Kantianism" or "Lotzeanism."

works (e.g., R.u.V. III, and Theologie und Metaphysik) testify to his great dependence upon history as a means of amplifying and elaborating his constructive category of the Lebensfuehrung.

(c) History serves as a means of legitimation. Once again, the historical excursuses in the systematic works, not to mention the historical works themselves, indicate the need that Ritschl felt to justify his own position on the basis of the historical tradition.

(d) History serves as the source of the purpose of theology. We have noted above how Ritschl's commitment to a certain understanding of history shaped the career of his theological work both as to its content and its strategy. It was, in other words, the turns and shifts of the historical continuum, as he understood them, which determined the goal of Ritschl's work.

An Assessment of Ritschl--A Suggestion and a Critique

This summary of the relation between historical and constructive factors in Ritschl's theological work leads directly to the evaluation of this relation and the issues involved in it. My procedure here will be first to elaborate the position from which I intend to assess Ritschl's solution to the problem of relating historical and constructive factors. This critical position is at the same time a suggestion for the solution of the problem of how history functions in Christian theology.

A Suggestion

The line of thinking that I propose here focusses on the assertion that history serves the systematic theologian as a principle of knowledge and a rubric of truth. What follows is a clarification and an elaboration of this assertion.

When I use the term "history" here, I refer to the past as it impinges upon conscious awareness in the present, and as it is efficacious within that present awareness. When history, used in this sense, is brought into the context of Christian theology, it must be taken to refer to the historical witness of the Christian community (conceived both as a corporate entity and as a communion of individuals) as this witness is efficacious in any present moment.

This juxtaposition of the Christian witness with the term "history" deserves explanation. The material of this witness resides in the historical continuity and contemporary breadth of the community--in its piety, worship, canonical writings, dogma, theology, and actions (including internal and external institutional relationships). This witness is comprised of many specific responses (which, taken together, form one massive response) which are said to have been engendered within human existence by God's encounter with the community (see more below). The events which comprise this communal witness are continuous (it is affirmed) by virtue of the action of God to which they testify. Many things may and must be said about these events and their continuity; but the most important thing that must be said (from the standpoint of the Christian community) is that they have their basis in this encounter with God, which issues in a challenge to submit to him as the ordering principle of existence. This communal witness, therefore, is an historical system; that is to say, it is constituted by historical events which (singly and as a constellation) are interpreted in such a way as to make what Professor Dorothy Emmet calls a "total assertion"[1] concerning human existence and its meaning. The events which

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[1]Dorothy Emmet, The Nature of Metaphysical Thinking (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1957), pp. 141-42.

constitute the witness are empirically available; they are not created by the community; their claim to be the history of God's dealing with man is also empirically observable. But it is only this Christian community which asserts that the most important aspect of these events (indeed, the key to their real, i.e., ultimate, meaning) is their place within the continuity of God's dealing with men; only this community employs these events so interpreted as its primary principle of knowledge and certainty; and only in this community are these events employed to make a "total assertion" about human existence and destiny. The work of faith does not lie in the mere acquaintance with these events and their claim; it lies in doing with them what only the Christian community does.[1]

The community's claim is that this organically continuous history--in its totality--constitutes a history of the acts of God, that it is thus the revelation of God's will and intention for man. By means of this witness (which constitutes, it must be remembered, an historical system), as its principle for knowing and rubric of truth, the community seeks to render its past (and that of each of its individual members) intelligible, to clarify and guide present commitment, and to sustain and direct future hope. This, then, describes the knowledge which the community and its theologians seek; and at the same time it describes the functioning of reason within the system.[2] That is to say, the functioning of the witness-system entails

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[1]Professor Wolfhart Pannenberg relates this view with Luther's notion of the "aeussere Klarheit" of Scripture. See his "Heilsgeschehen und Geschichte," Kerygma und Dogma, V (October, 1959), 277-278. See also Rudolf Bultmann, "On the Problem of Demythologizing," The Journal of Religion, XLII (April, 1962), 101.

[2]Such a description makes clear the validity of H. R. Niebuhr's correlation of historical reason with practical reason, in The Meaning of Revelation (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1941), Chapter 2, especially, pp. 73-80. See also Ernst Troeltsch's emphasis on the practical, in Christian Thought: Its History and Application (New York: Meridian Books, 1957), pp. 67-146.

that the present religious experience of the community and its members be taken up into the system and ordered (i.e., known) therein.[1] Reason functioning in this system observes the continually unfolding present and places it within the historical continuity of the community's witness. It achieves thereby the peculiar type of knowledge of which it is capable, and which the Christian theologian seeks. Thus, each moment of commitment is related to God's faithfulness, i.e., to his continuity-establishing action in history. Professor Wolfhart Pannenberg has elaborated upon this point in a manner that is most appropriate to the argument. He writes,

> Nur der Ursprung der Kontingenz der Geschehnisse kann, so scheint es, vermoege seiner Einheit auch Ursprung ihres Zusammenhanges sein, ohne ihre Kontingenz zu beeintraechtigen. Die Einheit der Ereignisse besteht nun aber nicht nur in ihrem transzendenten Ursprung. Sie sind ja nicht nur gegeneinander kontingent, sondern haengen auch untereinander zusammen. Dieser dem Geschehen innewohnende Zusammenhang gruendet in der ihm transzendenten Einheit Gottes, die sich als Treue manifisiert. Wenn aber der Zusammenhang der Begebenheiten in der Treue des freien Gottes gruendet, dann haben wir nicht eine Kontinuitaet des Durchhaltens aus der Vergangenheit in die Zukunft hinein ins Auge zu fassen, etwa in der Weise einer Entwicklung, sondern die in sich kontingenten Ereignisse werden gleichsam nach rueckwaerts angeknuepft, auf das Gewesene zurueckbezogen. Durch

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[1]I am assuming that theory which holds that knowing and verifying is a matter of ordering the actuality which one encounters. Essentially, this process of ordering consists of demonstrating a relationship between a center or focus from which one operates and the data of experience with which one must effect some sort of modus vivendi at the several moments of his life. The demonstration need not be logical; it may prove to be so irresistable at the level of sensibility that no conceptual support is necessary. When a clear relationship has been established, we can say that meaning has been reached; order has been achieved; a system has been implemented. Knowing is systematizing; the distinctive work of reason is system-building. Knowledge and action are impossible unless some such ordering or systematizing has taken place. For discussions of this systematizing, see A. N. Whitehead, The Function of Reason (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), Chapter 3; Dorothy Emmet, Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7, 9; and Wilhelm Dilthey, Gesammelte Schriften (5 vols.; Leipzig and Berlin: B. G. Teubner, 1924), V, 90-135. The focus or center of the Christian historical witness-system is the God whose action has established the continuity of the events within the system.

> solche Rueckbindung wird die Kontinuitaet je immer neu hergestellt. So aeussert sich die Treue Gottes. Nur in dieser Weise, als rueckgreifende Eingliederung des kontingent Neuen in das Gewesene, nicht aber umgekehrt als vorgreifende Lenkung und Wirkung kann der primaere Zusammenhang der Geschichte gedacht werden, ohne dass ihre Kontingenz verlorengeht. In diese Richtung weist auch die Tatsache, dass die Kontinuitaet des Geschehens immer erst vom Ende her ueberschaubar wird.[1]

It may be concluded that the norm or criterion by which the Christian theologian attains his knowledge and certainty consists of the totality of these events which constitute the Christian communal witness as they appear in any present moment.[2] This is what one should expect, inasmuch as the ultimate criterion of the Christian truth is the actuality of those events which can be said to be revelatory of God. The norm of knowledge for the Christian theologian may then be described as the totality of God's acts as this totality is focussed in any one present moment on any single concern, as it is refracted through the community's response to these acts of God.[3]

The cogency of this suggestion concerning the function of history in Christian theology may be enhanced by a more detailed consideration of the human response to God, within which history performs its service. This conception of history and its function in theology rests upon the prior conviction that the focus of the Christian faith--that to which its statements are ultimately to be referred and to which its joyful promise pertains--is the actuality of human existence as it is oriented in commitment upon God. This commitment constitutes at the same time a confession of the God who has engendered it.

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[1]Wolfhart Pannenberg, p. 285.

[2]Wolfhart Pannenberg, ed., Offenbarung als Geschichte (Goettingen, 1961), p. 17.

[3]This description of the norm coincides with the earlier definition of history (supra, p. 129).

This emphasis on God's activity of engendering human confession presupposes the following general existential structure: proceeding from the common deliverance of immediate awareness in which the self is aware of a not-self which stands over against (and yet in relation to) it, man is in certain instances aware of that not-self as placing upon him the demand that he accept it as the ordering principle of his existence. Such experience is religious experience; such an other (or not-self) is God; and in such experience the questions of the ultimate meaning of life arise. In such experience under the impact of the call to commitment, it is not enough that the self simply be <u>aware</u> of the other who presents itself as ordering principle. In addition, <u>knowledge</u> of the other is necessary, so that man can communicate with others concerning this other and its demand, and so that he can understand the wider implications of this demand for his total life and for all of reality as he knows it. Furthermore, <u>guidance</u> and <u>certainty</u> are necessary as the individual strives to understand precisely what constitutes commitment in any particular moment, and what constitutes <u>right</u> commitment (i.e., the question of truth) in relation to the wider reaches of his understanding of the world and other persons. The need arises for "total assertions" (Emmet) which will illumine this religious experience in its ultimate as well as its penultimate implications.

God engendering confession in human existence, as it is reflected in the response which takes place in that existence--it is this which stands as the ineradicable focus of the Christian faith. This in its <u>actuality</u>, in its <u>happening</u>--not in its idealization--is the primary datum of the faith as well as of the theology which is Christian.

Significant methodological implications derive from this fact that Christianity is rooted in actuality. The first is that in any situation

which demands knowledge or certainty of the Christian truth about existence under commitment, the only legitimate criterion of truth which can apply in a decisive way is actuality itself. That is to say, for the Christian who is seeking knowledge and certainty in his life under the demand of ultimate commitment, or for the Christian theologian who is reflecting upon this datum of commitment, the only decisive criteria are other instances of human existence which is placed under a similar demand. The second implication centers in the fact that the locus of this actuality of existence under commitment which serves as criterion is in the past--in the past instances in which human existence has witnessed to its encounter with the divine call to ultimate commitment. Thirdly, it follows that knowledge and certainty within the Christian faith demand a mode of knowing which operates on the basis of these past occurrences, i.e., an historical mode of knowing (defining "history" as I did above).

At this point the interrelation of history and existence becomes clear. On the one hand, it is in the context of existence that history presses upon man, and it is in the service of existential clarity that history becomes a matter of concern. But on the other hand, existence contains within itself the inevitable drive beyond itself into history. Christian theology, then, if it is true to the distinctive character of the Christian faith (i.e., that truth consists of the actuality of God calling human existence to commitment) inescapably pushes towards an historical mode of knowing as central to its methodology, with an appropriate historical norm (as I have discussed this above).

Although I cannot demonstrate it here, I would assert that such a concept of history and its functioning is particularly appropriate for

Christian theology for three reasons. First, it gives formal recognition to the power for shaping knowledge, truth and certainty which history has in fact always held in traditional Christian theology. This it can do because it submits its assertions to the normative power of history formally stated--not simply to one or more specific interpretations of history. Second, it possesses within itself the capabilities for providing a formal principle of knowledge and truth while doing the least violence to the primary datum of the Christian faith--i.e., the living reality of the human confession which is engendered by God's redemptive activity. It accomplishes this by permitting the instances of this reality to be incorporated at a formal level into its norm. This incorporation is to be contrasted with a metaphysical category which abstracts from these instances rather than incorporating them. Finally, it provides a viable understanding of history which neither denies the dynamic, relativizing movement of history nor falls prey to the meaninglessness of relativistic historicism. Such an understanding accepts without reservation the development and contingency of the historical continuum; and it does not hesitate to acknowledge the impact of that development on the norm of theology; it does not attempt to stifle the movement of history by means of the abstracted idealizations of ontological or existential categories. It recognizes that the norm is never static in a theological methodology which takes history so seriously, that the norm is in fact continually subject to enlargement and shift in perspective, that it is indeed a different norm in every new movement. But it does not thereby fall into helpless historical relativism, because it does not sacrifice the pre-eminence of God as norm in history. On the contrary, it insists that the very basis of the unity of history rests in God's faithfulness, and that the development and the shifting perspectives

of the theological principle of knowledge and truth have their basis only in God's own willingness (and ability) to accommodate himself to (and participate in) the vicissitudes of human existence and history.

A Critique

Ritschl's preoccupation with history must be evaluated on two levels. The first level is constituted by the general stance which Ritschl assumed on the problem of the role of history in Christian theology. This stance is characterized by the assertion that no construction is possible except within the context of historical judgment and commitment. The second level is that of the specific judgments and commitments which Ritschl made, and which formed the material content and strategy of his work. On both levels, the position just sketched will serve as the criterion by which to evaluate Ritschl's attempt to relate history and Christian theology.

1. The General Stance. Ritschl's sensitivity to the role that history must play in Christian theology is impressive. The specific manner in which he conceived of this role raises problems, however. That Ritschl acknowledged the fundamental way in which the theologian is beholden to history seems beyond question. This dissertation has shown above how he understood history to serve as a principle of knowledge, a means of elaboration, a means of legitimation, and as the source of the purpose in theology. Such a position is further demonstrated in two succinct statements which Ritschl made in his early years concerning systematic theology. In his 1845 lectures on dogmatics, in a comparison of biblical and systematic theology, he writes that the former has the task of deriving the Christian principle from the New Testament, whereas the latter articulates this principle in the form which the general consciousness demands. To which he adds,

> Dabei soll aber die Continuitaet der historischen Entwicklung dadurch gewahrt werden, dass jede neue Gestaltung sich sowohl als das Resultat der ganzen geschichtlichen Entwicklung darstellt, als auch ihre Uebereinstimmung mit dem Selbstbewusstsein Christi und ihre Abhaengigkeit von diesem erweist.[1]

And later, in 1853, as he attempted to outline an adequate methodology for systematic theology, he wrote to his father, most provocatively,

> Es handelt sich fuer die Dogmatik um Erkenntnisquelle und Erkenntnisprincip. Fuer die religioese Erkenntnis ist in letzterer Hinsicht ein richtiger Begriff von Tradition nicht zu umgehen, d.h. die Darstellung des persoenlichen Glaubens in Wechselwirkung mit den gedanklichen und sittlichen Formen der Gemeinschaft. Erkenntnisquelle ist die Schrift, d.h. als Document der Offenbarungsgeschichte. Fuer die theologische Erkenntnis ist nun zu merken, dass die Katholiken die Tradition auch als Erkenntnisprincip, die alten protestantischen Orthodoxen die Schrift auch als principium cognoscendi behandelten. Beides ist falsch. Das theologische Erkenntnisprincip muss die Synthesis des religioesen Erkenntnisprincips mit dem vollen Besitze der Geschichte der Wechselwirkung der Froemmigkeit mit der Schrift und mit dem Weltbewusstsein sein. . . . Darin liegt die Kirchlichkeit der Dogmatik, die doch darum meine Dogmatik sein muss.[2]

Ritschl was very clearly aware of the constitutive force of history in systematic theology. He is able, therefore, to accomplish with his understanding of history the first of the three important functions that were summarized above;[3] i.e., he did recognize the power for shaping knowledge, truth, and certainty which history has in fact always held in traditional Christian theology. But this awareness is vitiated rather decisively by one methodological blunder which makes it impossible for Ritschl to carry out the other two functions with his understanding of history.

This blunder can be described in several ways. One way is to say that Ritschl has allowed history to make an impact on his work at a material level only, and not at a formal level. Another way of putting it is to say that he has permitted a material formulation of the essence of

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[1] Quoted in Otto Ritschl, I, 101. (Italics mine.)

[2] Ibid., p. 229. (Italics mine.)

[3] Supra, pp. 134-35.

Christianity to operate as a formal norm in his theology. The issue here is one in which the theologian is faced with the problem not merely of using history but also with taking it seriously in its own integrity--of providing a place for history in one's theological methodology which will allow it to play a constitutive and regulative role at every point of the theological enterprise, in its own right and not simply as a dynamic proof-text for the concerns which the theologian inevitably brings to his consideration of history. A theological methodology which does not allow history to play this constitutive and regulative role does not really take history seriously; it inevitably depreciates history to the status of means to some other constructive end.

In the final analysis, Ritschl could not allow history to play this basic role in his methodology. As a consequence, he ultimately violates the integrity of the very historical reality that he knows himself beholden to, because he places this history at the mercy of a constructive category which distorts it. In other words, in violating the integrity of the historical witness of the Christian community, Ritschl violates his own methodological intentions.

This inner incongruity in Ritschl's theological methodology manifests itself at several points, already evident in the discussion in Chapters I and II. It crops out, for example, in Ritschl's recurring practice of positing a given, almost physical, continuity between historical epochs, only to render this continuity theologically insignificant by subjecting it to evaluation under a constructive category.[1] Ferdinand Christian Baur could evaluate this given unity of the historical continuum positively in

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[1] Supra, pp. 80-81, 112.

its own right, because he could relate it without exception to the life of God.[1] Ritschl cannot relate history qua history to the divine life. He cannot even relate Christian history to God directly. Time and again we have observed that he can evaluate positively only that history which passes muster in the light of his own distinctive category of judgment, i.e., the Lebensfuehrung. This may explain why, in turn, Ritschl never really turned his attention to history except as he conceived it to be the history of this Lebensfuehrung. Gnosticism does not interest him; nor does Greek Christology; nor does the Greek Christian elaboration of the Trinity; nor does the Christian tradition of worship and cultus; nor do other large areas of Christian history--because he cannot conceive their being relevant to the Lebensfuehrung. This category, in the final analysis, is the overpowering norm in Ritschl's theology. To be sure, he cannot apply this norm except within the context of his preoccupation with history and its continuity; but the real constitutive and regulative power of history is nearly always, from a methodological point of view, subordinated to this norm which is constituted by the category of Lebensfuehrung.

But this category is emphatically ill-suited to function at so crucial a level in Ritschl's theology, because it is a specific judgment which emerged from one idiosyncratic configuration of piety. Its idiosyncratic character constitutes its genius. Ritschl's normative category of Lebensfuehrung is not a formal category that embraces all forms of piety; on the contrary, it excludes all forms of piety save one (the implications of Ritschl's use of this norm are discussed in the next section). If it did not exclude these other forms, history would have no meaning for

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[1]Baur's difficulties arise because he is selective, and not because he fails to acknowledge the formally constitutive role of history. Supra, pp. 38-39.

Ritschl. The point of this criticism is not that Ritschl is selective, nor that he brings presuppositions to history. The contention is not that uninterpreted or presuppositionless history is or ought to be available to the theologian. Rather, I am suggesting that Ritschl's theological work is beset by incongruities which undermine his own intention to permit history to shape the content and strategy of that work. This incongruity arises from his inability to permit history to permeate his theological methodology as a factor which in its own integrity is worthy to function normatively; it arises from the fact that he permits too specific and too idiosyncratic a category to exercise a formally normative function in his work. This category (the Lebensfuehrung) represents the constructive factor in Ritschl's theology. He related it axiologically to the historical factors in his work so as to deny them any normative power except as their integrity has been altered to fit his understanding of Lebensfuehrung. So conceived and so altered, the historical factors could never bear the freight of normativeness that Ritschl apparently wanted to load upon them; because they had been deprived of the very characteristics which make history so appropriate a norm otherwise--breadth (which saves the theologian from the partiality of his own relativity) and independent integrity (which mitigates the subjectivism which besets every discriminating judgment that the theologian makes).[1]

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[1]Traditionally, Christian theologians have taken refuge in the normative character of history by invoking it under one of two forms--either as the appeal to the "fathers and the brethren" or as the appeal to Scripture (or to the Word). Ritschl acknowledged the normativeness of history under both of these forms. But he rendered this normativeness ineffective by his methodological violation of the integrity of history. Of contemporary theologians, Wolfhart Pannenberg has perhaps spelled out most clearly the alternative to Ritschl's axiological relationship between historical and constructive factors, at least in terms of theological methodology. He suggests, in his Offenbarung als Geschichte, that God's truth is

This methodological blunder rendered Ritschl incapable of achieving with his understanding of history the second of the functions summarized on page 135. I.e., he was unable to provide a formal principle of knowledge and truth without doing considerable violence to the primary datum of the Christian faith, namely, the living reality of the human confession which is engendered by God's redemptive activity. Ritschl recognized--and acknowledged--this primary datum. Indeed, his category of Lebensfuehrung aims precisely at preserving the importance of this datum of the living human confession.[1] But because he permitted one idiosyncratic form of this confession to exercise formally normative power in his work, he brutally violates the integrity of all human confessions--either by rejecting them out of hand as perverse or by conforming them to his material formulation of Lebensfuehrung. (This will be discussed in more detail below.) This ironic perversion of the purpose for which he intended his category of Lebensfuehrung is a further manifestation of the internal incongruity which marks Ritschl's work.

This same blunder renders Ritschl's understanding of history incapable of accomplishing the third function mentioned above; namely, the presentation of a viable understanding of history which can do justice to the dynamic movement of history while at the same time avoiding the meaninglessness of relativistic historicism. The source of this inability is

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not simply within history (as Ritschl believed), but that in a sense history is revelation, inasmuch as the totality of the historical acts of God are, in their own integrity, the unfolding of God's being ad extra. Pannenberg thus repossesses Baur's openness to history qua history, but he does so by means of a notion of God's revelatory activity, rather than by means of a metaphysical category.

[1] Supra, note one, p. 14.

simple to locate: Ritschl's constructive category imposed a unity on history, and his axiological propensity compelled him to reject as perverse all of the phenomena which fell outside this unity. Relativistic historicism could scarcely be a problem for his work, because his constructive category restricted so decisively the range of the dynamic relativizing movement of the historical continuum. Here again, the painful tension is manifested which arises from the internal incongruity of Ritschl's method. Within the movement of the historical continuum from epoch to epoch, Ritschl recognized the dynamic of change, with its great diversity. But he reduced the relativizing factor in this dynamic to the point where he did not even have to take it into account. In none of his methodological prefaces[1] does he come to grips with the problems of historical relativism which so exercises theologians today. He reduces the force of this relativizing movement, because he subsumes all of the phenomena of history under one category, that of Lebensfuehrung. By means of this category he reduces the phenomena to relevance or irrelevance. Ignoring the latter (e.g., his ommission of the concern for creeds among the antignostic fathers), he reduces the relevant phenomena to adequacy or inadequacy, whereupon he rejects the latter. Otto Ritschl corroborates this analysis when he writes concerning the methodology of the mature Albrecht Ritschl, "An der Uebereinstimmung in der Froemmigkeit also erwiest sich ueberhaupt die geschichtliche Continuitaet der religioesen Entwicklung."[2] And for his purposes, there was no history except the history of "der religioesen Entwicklung" interpreted in terms of Froemmigkeit or Lebensfuehrung.

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[1]For example, the introductions to each of the volumes of R.u.V.

[2]Otto Ritschl, II, 170-71.

In summary, concerning Ritschl's general stance, it must be admitted that he did acknowledge the role which history had to play in systematic theological work. And in practice he committed himself to the power of history to inform and sustain his work. But both his insight and his commitment were vitiated by the methodological blunder outlined here. The foregoing has indicated how this blunder affected Ritschl's basic insights. The following section will turn to his material commitments.

2. Specific Judgments and Commitments. Several pertinent questions arise for the systematic theologian, on the basis of certain specific judgments and commitments which Ritschl made as he pursued his theological enterprise under the impact of history. The evaluation of Ritschl will consist of phrasing these questions and discussing the problems which they raise so as to suggest both the strengths and weaknesses of Ritschl's position, always over against the critical position sketched above.

The questions may be phrased as follows:

a. Must the Protestant theologian commit himself to apostolic-Reformation Christianity?

b. Must the Protestant theologian be, in principle, opposed to Catholicism, as well as to other types of Christianity?

c. How is the Protestant theologian to account for the unity as well as the divergence between his Christianity and that of Catholicism and these other types of Christianity?

d. Must the Protestant theologian posit a deviation or "fall" in the movement from apostolic to Catholic Christianity?

e. Is it satisfactory for the Protestant theologian to distinguish his own type of Christianity and its opposition to Catholicism in terms of piety (Froemmigkeit) or Lebensfuehrung?

f. Is historical continuity a central issue for the theologian? Is his work in fact a grand attempt to establish certain kinds of continuities and to reject others?

g. If so, is Lebensfuehrung or piety an adequate category to serve as the locus, bearer, and expression of this continuity?

The theologian's approach to these questions depends ultimately on his understanding (be it implicit or explicit) of historical continuity and the role it plays in his work. The critical position outlined above, as well as Ritschl's own position,[1] holds that history serves certain crucial functions for the Christian theologian, because it constitutes the principle of knowledge and of certainty (or legitimation) for his work. History has to serve this function (in the position here assumed) if the theologian is to maintain the integrity of the primary datum of the Christian faith, the only datum that can justifiably function as the ultimate norm for theology--namely, the confession which is engendered in human existence by virtue of God's redemptive activity in that existence. If this be an accurate assessment of the norm which confronts the theologian, then historical continuity must be a central issue for the theologian. His theological methodology must be carefully shaped so that its structure allows for the constitutive and regulative force of history, resp. the historical witness of the Christian community. Indeed, this shaping of the structure of theological methodology may be the most important (as well as the most difficult) methodological task which faces the systematic theologian today. In Ritschl's own words, the theologian must learn what it means, methodologically, that every new form is itself the result of the

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[1]Supra, pp. 127-28.

entire historical development that precedes it and at the same time it must manifest its agreement with and its dependence on the self-awareness of Jesus Christ.[1] The theologian must learn the methodological implications of Ritschl's judgment that religious knowledge (and theological reflection upon that knowledge) cannot avoid an adequate conception of tradition.[2] Or, in Pannenberg's terms, the theologian must wrestle with the methodological implications of the fact that only the totality of God's acts can be understood as the revelation of God; and since God is one, that means that the totality of the events in God's history.[3] These insights imply that the concern for continuity pertains to the substance of the theologian's task as well as to its methodology. The cruciality of historical continuity for the Christian theologian may be summed up thus: Unless he can be aware of a continuity between his own work and the Christian tradition which extends to the biblical witness, the Christian theologian cannot be confident as to the validity of what he says, nor of the means which he employs to know and to verify his message. The theologian is, therefore, always under the imperative (either consciously or unconsciously) to erect certain types of historical continuities. The problems which arise at this point are formidable, and they are largely unsolved--or insoluble--(e.g., problems of diversity in history, of historical relativism, of the validity of Christian history over against non-Christian religions, etc.).[4] But the desirability, even the necessity, of implementing such an historical methodology in systematic theology, makes one bold

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[1] Supra, note one, p. 137. [2] Supra, note two, p. 137.

[3] Pannenberg, Offenbarung als Geschichte, p. 17.

[4] Ibid., pp. 16-20 for a discussion of still other problems.

to assert that the immensity of the problems is an indication of the great importance of the issue in question.

Our argument has seriously questioned Ritschl's success in working out a theological methodology that is adequate to this understanding of historical continuity.[1] But there seems little doubt, in the light of the material that has been brought to light in Chapters I and II, that he was at least instinctively aware of the validity of this methodology, and that he did in fact implement it, in spite of his theoretical blunders, which unfortunately marred his admirable sensitivity to the issues involved. As we shall note below, this may indeed be the clue to Ritschl's power and to the significance that his work has held in the past four generations, as well as a clue to the importance which it holds for contemporary theology. It may well be that the greatest weakness in the critical literature on Ritschl to date is its failure to illumine this aspect of his work and significance.

The question now arises concerning the way in which this historical continuity is to be identified. What sort of category can serve to locate it, to serve as its bearer and expression? The answer to this question depends on the answer to the prior question, "By virtue of <u>what</u> does the continuity of Christian history exist at all?" The history of theology is instructive at this point, particularly in its grappling with the notion of the "essence" of Christianity. The most satisfactory suggestion appears to be the one which affirms that this continuity is rooted in the action of a God who is one and who is faithful.[2] This suggestion must be set in

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[1] <u>Supra</u>, pp. 136-43.

[2] See, for example, H. H. Rowley, <u>The Unity of the Bible</u> (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1955), Chapter 1.

contradistinction to suggestions that the continuity is constituted by structures of reason or of human religious experience.[1] This action of the one, faithful God does not appear apart from reason and the human existence whose confession of commitment it engenders. And it follows that this confession is a statement concerning man, even as it concerns God; the confession may indeed speak of God only in the language of human analogy. But the engendering occasion of the confession has to do with divine action rather than with human experience; and the ultimate explanation for the emergence and the existence of the confession is the meeting with God (however he may be conceived) which is the subject of the confession. All of this is to say that the tradition of Christian history is not primarily a history of human religious experience (although it is that); on the contrary, it is the history of God' revelatory and redemptive action (however that may be defined).[2] The clear implication to be drawn from these comments is that history is related intimately, indeed we can say ontologically, to the life of God. The precise nature of this relation is open to speculation, but it remains a mystery. Its being a mystery does by no means lessen its reality, however--at least, this is the confession of the Christian community.

Ritschl understood this when he formulated his notion of Lebensfuehrung. We have surveyed his repeated emphasis that this Lebensfuehrung is characterized by the interrelation of human and divine factors, the latter of which is pre-eminent and to be superordinated to the former.

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[1]The affirmation of such structures is the issue at stake in some of the alternative approaches to history mentioned in the introductory remarks, supra, pp. 6-7.

[2]My own definition appears above; supra, p. 129.

And in his succinct statement of the methodology in systematic theology he makes it clear that he elaborates upon human religious experience in order to illumine "alles was als Gnadenwirkungen Gottes auf den Christen zu erkennen ist."[1] The category of Lebensfuehrung is a testimony to God's gracious action. But this category did not function as such a testimony when it was placed in the role of a formal theological norm. When Ritschl used it in this role, he very plainly elevated the lineaments of human experience to the status of a criterion, and it was in virtue of these lineaments that he employed it as the bearer and expression of historical continuity. It was solely by virtue of these lineaments of human experience that the category functioned as a criterion, according to whose application Catholicism, Pietism and confessionalism were deemed discontinuous with the authentic Christian historical tradition, and by which the apostles, Luther, and Ritschl himself were deemed continuous with this tradition. Here again the internal incongruity is revealed which was occasioned by Ritschl's methodological blunder. The very divine action to which the category of Lebensfuehrung was supposed to testify was, in the final analysis, rendered methodologically inoperative when Ritschl attempted to put that category to a formally normative use for which it was structurally unsuited. This category became, when put to this use, an exceedingly dangerous weapon. As a formal criterion, it came very close to identifying the authentic Christian revelation of God's life in history with a single idiosyncratic configuration of human religious experience. One may therefore conclude that, although the intention of this notion of Lebensfuehrung

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[1]Ritschl, R.u.V. III, 22. Supra, p. 101.

is helpful, its use as category for identifying, locating and expressing the continuity of the historical action of God must be irrevocably rejected.

The question remains, what sort of category can function in Christian theology to designate this historical continuity? This is an exceedingly difficult and complex problem, to which this writer presumes to offer no solution. Some suggestions can be made, however. Rather than locating the continuity, as Ritschl has done, in the piety (or Lebensfuehrung) alone of the individual believers who exist in the Christian community, it seems preferable to locate it in the total corporate life of the community, as well as in the total lives of its individual members. This total life includes piety, worship, canonical and later writings, dogma, theology, and actions (including internal and external institutional relationships, as well as personal ethical actions).

But how is the continuity, which occurs in the locus of this life, to be identified? This is the most difficult methodological question of all. It must be kept in mind that this methodological problem is not to be solved by intellection alone. It is, as H. Richard Niebuhr writes, "not an intellectual exercise but a moral event."[1] The decision which the theologian makes here is, in part at least, a decision of faith.[2] Furthermore, it is a problem whose solution calls for awareness at the level of

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[1]H. Richard Niebuhr, The Meaning of Revelation (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1941), pp. 75ff.

[2]This is a consideration which deserves much more attention than it generally receives, particularly in respect to its force in the history of the Christian faith. One of the most striking testimonies to its importance is the pathos which has accompanied great transitions in the development of the faith, as a result of the difficulties which men have had in discerning just what constitutes historical continuity. For example, the study of the transition from the Mosaic to the Davidic religion is most instructive. (See Gerhard von Rad, Theologie des alten Testaments (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1957), pp. 56-65; Albrecht Alt, Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel (2 vols.; Munich: Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1953),

sensibilities as much as it calls for intellectual acumen. These considerations account, in part, for the complexity of the problem; they account for the imprecision which must always accompany the discussion of this problem.

Certain statements can be made, however, concerning the identification of this continuity. In order to affirm a continuity in the life of the Christian community as I have elaborated it above, the theologian must be able to make the following assertions in respect to the confessional phenomena whose continuity he is seeking to establish. Ultimately, he must make them in respect to the relation between his own work and the Christian historical witness. Furthermore, he must be able to demonstrate concretely the plausibility of his assertions (it is unlikely that he can demonstrate their absolute validity). These assertions presuppose the general framework of existence as outlined above on pages 125-126.

a. He must be able to assert that the Other (or God) to which the various confessional phenomena refer is one and the same God, and that this God is the same God to whom the Christian communal witness itself refers. This means that the theologian must be able to affirm that one

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II, 60-65). Other transitions of similar import: The church's movement from Palestine to the West; the transition from first to third century ecclesiastical forms; the transition from Latin to Germanic forms, etc., etc. One of the clearest discussions of the relation of faith and theological methodology occurs in the works of Saint Irenaeus, first great post-apostolic Christian theologian. He makes it clear that the theologian must not expect to understand the force of the historical tradition unless he approaches it in faith; nor can he employ it in his work apart from faith. For this reason, it is important that the student of the traditional faith be diligent in prayer, meditation, study, and obedience. For this reason also, the proper theological methodology brings with it communion with God, love for God and man, and the authority to discern and refute heresy. See his Adversus Haereses, Book III, 5, 1 and IV, 26-33 (particularly the comments on the discipulus spiritalis).

and the same God has engendered the various historical confessions with which he is dealing as his principle of knowledge and truth.

b. He must be able to assert that the ordering principle of existence to which the various confessing epochs, groups, and individuals have committed themselves (and from whose commitment the respective confessions emerge) is essentially one and the same ordering principle.

c. He must be able to assert that the historic and contemporary confessions which constitute the community's witness (which is an historical system) stand in one and the same relation to the God who engendered them.[1]

d. He must be able to assert that in some sense this continuity, marked by the three foregoing characteristics, has extended to, and embraced, his very own life and work; and that the community and its witness is his own.[2]

This writer is not prepared to go any further at this time towards the resolution of this problem of designating the historical continuity which looms so large in Christian theological methodology. What has been said should serve, however, to point to the methodological complexity which besets the theological resolution of the problem, as well as to suggest the sophisticated set of criteria with which the Christian theologian must approach it if he is to do work in a responsible and wissenschaftlich manner. These remarks should also make clear what this writer believes to be

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[1]This relation is in itself a considerable problem. See the description of it as that of "systematic concomitant variation," in Emmet, pp. 62-63. See also Pannenberg's less detailed description of it as "indirect" in Offenbarung als Geschichte, pp. 16-20. Ritschl dealt with this problem in terms of Lotze's epistemology (supra, p. 101). Baur employed the Hegelian dialectic in his approach to the nature of this relation.

[2]See H. Richard Niebuhr's well-known statements concerning "internal" and "external" history.

an important consideration, namely, that theological methodology itself (particularly the process of identifying the historical continuity in question) is partly a matter of the religious faith of the theologian.

From these comments it follows that the Protestant theologian (indeed, the Christian theologian in general) cannot be <u>in principle</u> opposed to any single confessional manifestation in Christian history. He cannot justify any such preconceived opposition, in the first place, because this history is related so intimately (albeit mysteriously) with the career of the divine life itself. F. C. Baur and his fellow-Hegelians were able to understand this much better than Ritschl. His insensitivity at this point may account for the brutality with which he could dismiss certain historical manifestations within Christian history--a flat contradiction of the care and appreciation with which he investigated these manifestations historically. Secondly, the Christian theologian cannot be in principle opposed to Catholicism or any other Christian manifestation, because of the role that these manifestations may play in his theological methodology, <u>resp</u>. his methods of knowing and certification. Finally, the very complexity of the methodological apparatus as I have outlined it above compels the Christian theologian to move cautiously in his opposition to the historic and contemporary Christian confessions. But on the other hand, all of these considerations encourage the theologian to approach these confessions with openness, because of the constitutive and regulative function which they may serve in his work. This stance of openness is the one with which Ritschl instinctively approached Christian history and theology. But, as we have noted repeatedly, he always vitiated this stance by his propensity for judgments which proceeded along the lines dictated by his category of <u>Lebensfuehrung</u>.

In particular, it appears to be much too simplistic to point to a deviation or a "fall" between Catholic Christianity and apostolic Christianity. Such a deviation is not even necessary unless one's commitment to the Reformation hinges on a category of judgment which is as idiosyncratic as Ritschl's. Indeed, positing such a deviation or fall between these two epochs probably raises more problems than it solves. It is unsatisfactory anthropologically, because it censures late Hellenistic Christian man for responding to God's action in the only terms available to him; and because it suggests that he ought to have responded in terms which were at home only in an earlier or a later age. Such a procedure is unsatisfactory theologically, because it suggests a breach in the divine unity as well as in the divine faithfulness. Just how the Christian theologian--or the Christian community of faithful believers, for that matter--could proceed amid such chaos is difficult to imagine. Both Ritschl and his student, Adolph von Harnack, obviated this chaos by the devious suggestion that the confessions of certain men and epochs (e.g., early Greek Catholicism), although inferior and perverse, were nevertheless sincere. This sincerity, coupled with an apparent confidence in God's ability to engender more adequate confessions at a later date (e.g., during the Reformation and the nineteenth century) seems to suffice for Ritschl and Harnack. Actually, both Ritschl and Harnack knew better; and both of them erected impressive demonstrations of the unity of Christian history, only to undermine these demonstrations with their keen historical judgments.[1]

The argument which I am pursuing does not imply that the theologian must be blind to the diversity that exists within Christian history, or to

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[1]Supra, pp. 66ff., 80ff.

the divergence between his own confession and that of other types of Christianity. On the contrary, he is keenly aware of this diversity. It is given in his awareness, perhaps even prior to all else, because he recognizes the dynamic of the historical continuum and the relativity which accompanies the multiplicity of perspectives, both of time and place, that constitute this continuum. Indeed, in a real sense the diversity within history is the given, not the problem. Rather, the problem posed by history is likely to be its unity. This unity is and has been the postulate of faith. But in the light of the character of his God and of the methodological realities which confront him, this unity of God and the divine action is a postulate that the Christian theologian cannot avoid.

It is precisely at this point that the inadequacy--one might even say the perversity--of Ritschl's category of Lebensfuehrung becomes obvious, at least as a category for identifying and expressing the continuity of Christian history. Such a category cuts the very sinew of the community's understanding of God's gracious revelation, namely, its conception of the unity and faithfulness of divine grace which makes redemption a possibility in spite of the diversity of time, place, and the psychic idiosyncracies within the range of human existence. Ritschl's insistence on a certain Lebensfuehrung or Froemmigkeit as the identifying category of the Christian historical continuity specifically undermines this grace, because it makes God's redemptive grace accessible within only one configuration of the human psyche. Only by running roughshod over the realities of human diversity and historical relativism is Ritschl able to affirm a continuity even of this Lebensfuehrung. If he had honestly wrestled with what we now know about the relativism of time and place, the idiosyncracies of race and nation, he would have had to admit that this psychical configuration to which grace is

alone accessible was very likely a present reality only to those who shared the idiosyncracies of a Paul or a Luther or a Ritschl. And if he were rigorously consistent in his reasoning, he might have had to reconsider whether the commonality between these figures is sufficient to warrant the assumption that all three shared the same Lebensfuehrung. (One suspects that only the nineteenth-century German bourgeois would really meet the specifications of this category of piety.) Ritschl apparently could not allow for the same unity between differing Lebensfuehrungen which he had documented empirically in apostolic Christianity between the Jews of the Temple (James), the Jews of the Diaspora (Paul) and the gentiles of Hellenistic origin.

A final question remains: Must the Protestant theologian commit himself to apostolic-Reformation Christianity? It follows from the critical position which I have been suggesting that the Christian theologian must indeed commit himself to the apostolic and Reformation confessions. This follows from the Ritschlian position also. But the reasoning behind these common commitments and the theological imperatives deriving from them could not be more different. Ritschl committed himself to the confessions which emerged from these epochs, because he believed that in them alone the normative revelation, expressed in a normative conception of piety, was to be found. The imperative which derived from this commitment demanded the demonstration of the continuity between these confessions, the rejection of all other Christian confessions, and the positive enunciation of the heritage of this continuity so as to extend its efficacy up to his own day.

I would suggest that the Christian theologian--be he Protestant, Roman, or Orthodox--is beholden to these periods because God has acted in them mightily, engendering significant confessions therein--confessions which have in both cases been epoch-making in their impact upon the

Christian community, even upon the western world as a whole. Without recourse to these confessions, the theologian is in danger of cutting himself off from the fullest possible knowledge of God and from the means for verifying his knowledge of God in a responsible manner. Without the apostolic confession, it is doubtful that he would consider himself to be a Christian theologian at all. But the confessions of these ages do not constitute the totality of God's revelation, nor do they invite the theologian to reject all other Christian confessions. On the contrary, if it were not for the confessions of subsequent ages (and the faithfulness of God to which those confessions point), it is unlikely that we would be aware of either the apostles (and their Christ) or the reformers. The commitment to apostolic and Reformation Christianity rather impels the Christian theologian to turn to whatever source he can, wherever the divinely engendered human confession occurs which will give him the knowledge and the certainty of the grace which may take him and his age up into the divine life--by whatever mystery that can be accomplished. Disciplined reflection upon this grace and upon its interpretation and communication constitutes the Christian theologian's task.

Ritschl's Present Relevance

This concludes the evaluation of Albrecht Ritschl's theology of history. I have attempted to treat Ritschl with fairness--exercising rigorous criticism where it seemed to be in order, but balancing this criticism with warm appreciation, even admiration, where they appeared to be appropriate. But where does Ritschl stand, at the end of this analysis and evaluation?

Almost thirty years ago, H. R. Mackintosh wrote, "Ritschl at the moment belongs, like Tennyson, to the 'middle distance': too far for

gratitude, too near for reverence."[1] Jaroslav Pelikan, only three years ago, expressed the opinion that Mackintosh's bon mot "is still valid."[2] "Perhaps," he adds, "a new emphasis upon historical honesty among theologians . . . will give Ritschl his due."[3] The writer of this dissertation hopes, very frankly, that the interpretation expressed herein may constitute a step--be it ever so small--towards fulfilling the need that Professors Mackintosh and Pelikan have called attention to.

This dissertation indicates the lines which the new appreciation of Ritschl might follow. It is not along the lines of a profounder grasp of the psychological, philosophical and philosophical-theological undertones in his work (although such a grasp is to be wished for, also). It is a tribute to the diligence of historical scholarship that we have at our disposal numerous exhaustive discussions of Ritschl's Kantianism, his Lotzeanism, his theory of value-judgments, and his ethically oriented understanding of the Christian faith. What we do not have at our disposal is an adequate appreciation of Albrecht Ritschl as a theologian of the Christian tradition. I suggest that if the man holds any relevance at all for our day, it is in his role as a theologian who was concerned to understand the message which constitutes the heritage of the traditional Christian faith and to interpret and proclaim that message to his day. The search for understanding came more easily to him than the proclamation; this search consumed the greater portion of his time and output; for this reason, Ritschl's efforts have produced fruit for students of theology, rather than

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[1]H. R. Mackintosh, p. 141, note one.

[2]In "Introduction" to Karl Barth, Protestant Thought: From Rousseau to Ritschl (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), p. 10.

[3]Ibid.

producing an apologetic to the age--although the material for an apologetic (to his own age, at least) is certainly to be found in his work.

The thesis suggests that Ritschl was a Protestant theologian who sought to be Catholic within the circumstances of his own abilities and of his own age, and that herein lies his significance to Christian theologians today. The term "Catholic," when applied to Ritschl, may seem inappropriate. Closer examination reveals, however, that the term may indeed fit Ritschl's intention rather well. Professor Pelikan has recently spoken of catholicity in the following terms, in connection with Friedrich Schleiermacher:

> . . . Protestant theology has proved that it can supply alternatives to Thomism that are just as comprehensive and yet just as Christian. . . . Now it is becoming evident that in the thought of Schleiermacher Protestantism possesses a resource for a world view that is simultaneously comprehensive and Christian--comprehensive in the sense that it takes seriously what the sciences and the humanities have learned about reality, Christian in the sense that it relates all of this to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Since "comprehensive" in this context refers to "Universality" and "Christian" in this context refers to "identity," what this really means is that the theology of Schleiermacher is catholic in the best sense of the word.[1]

If the interpretation outlined in this dissertation be correct, Ritschl was certainly a Catholic Christian theologian--by instinct and intention, if not in accomplishment. Although he was probably not so successful as Schleiermacher in attaining this Catholicity; and although he surely does not attain to Schleiermacher's "comprehensiveness" (as Pelikan uses this term); it may be that he surpasses Schleiermacher's Catholicity in one

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[1]Jaroslav Pelikan, The Riddle of Roman Catholicism (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1959), p. 229. (Italics mine.) Pelikan's comments on Schleiermacher's being both comprehensive and Christian are remarkably similar to Ritschl's own understanding of the task of systematic theology. He writes that biblical theology has "die Aufgabe . . . das christliche Princip zu entwickeln und zu erkennen" from the New Testament materials. Systematic theology has the task of giving this Christian principle the form "welche der Stand des allgemeinen Bewusstseins und die jeweilige Ausbreitung des ethischen und theoretischen Wissens erfordert." See Otto Ritschl, I, 101.

aspect which is instructive for theologians today--he wrestled more seriously with the totality of the traditional Christian witness than his predecessor (whose follower he counted himself).

The term "Catholic" may perhaps be applied to Ritschl even more legitimately if we accept the categories of another contemporary theologian. Gustaf Aulen, writing in the same year as Pelikan, elaborates this understanding of the term,

> Catholicity . . . is entirely dependent on the fact that Christ is the Lord of the church. Perhaps it could be said that the meaning of catholicity does not appear as immediately as that of unity, holiness, and apostolicity. The interpretation of its meaning has varied. But two fundamental aspects inevitably come to the fore: universality and continuity. The two are closely related and cannot be separated. The church could not be the universal church if it did not through the ages stand in unbroken relationship with the original church which had its origin in Christ, the church of Easter and Pentecost.[1]

According to this definition, in terms of universality and continuity, both the adequacies and the inadequacies of Ritschl's work, in its relevance for contemporary theology, come to light. He understood the cruciality for the Christian faith of the universality of God's grace as manifested in Christ and in his church. He makes this clear in his interpretation of early Christianity. But thereafter, his instinctive concern for universality is modified, as I have demonstrated above, by the strange internal incongruity that stems from a fundamental methodological blunder. Ritschl's real power, however, as I have also expressed it above, was his appreciation of the importance of continuity for the Christian faith and its theological enterprise.

Concomitant to this Catholic intention, one must note Ritschl's sensitivity to the issues of ecclesiology and soteriology. Although he did

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[1]Gustaf Aulen, Reformation and Catholicity, trans. Eric Wahlstrom (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), pp. 182-83.

not resolve the problems which attend these issues, he had a clear vision of the fact that Christianity was true to its essential nature only when it proclaimed a redemption which could do justice to man's capabilities, as well as to his predicaments. He also saw with unusual clarity that such an understanding of redemption could not be implemented unless it were complemented by an understanding of the church which could provide for the circumstances of the initiation and sustaining of this redemption. Therefore, he was quick to reject any understanding of redemption which, in his opinion, depreciated either God's prevenience and power or the reality of man's response and regeneration under the impact of God's grace.[1] On the other hand, he insisted that such a concept of redemption was inexplicable apart from an understanding of the church which could account for man's encounter with God, his ability to respond to the divine grace, and his ongoing sanctification.[2] These are truly Catholic concerns, and their significance is gaining increasing attention among theologians today.

In the final analysis, one must admire Ritschl more for the questions he raised and attempted to solve than for the positive answers which he gave. This is another way of saying that he holds more relevance for students of theological methodology than for students of homiletics (although

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[1]Supra, pp. 98ff. Ritschl was so concerned for the power of God and the integrity of man in his understanding of redemption that he tended to collapse justification and regeneration into one. By so doing, he approached the position of the Roman Catholic gratia cooperans (or fides caritate formata) which he opposed so bitterly. It is instructive that contemporary Protestant-Roman conversations are forcing Protestant theologians to reconsider their traditional opposition to the gratia cooperans. Professor K. E. Skydsgaard, then Director of Research of the Lutheran World Federation Special Commission on Interconfessional Research, reported this fact publicly to a group of National Lutheran Council theological students at Palos Park, Illinois, on November 3, 1961.

[2]Supra, pp. 98-100, 104-105.

for three generations, Protestant preachers have been more Ritschlian than we might wish). To speak of Ritschl in this way is really more of a tribute than a criticism, because it constitutes a criticism which is built upon the very method and concern to which Ritschl dedicated his own theological career. And the greatest tribute to a teacher is that following generations should supersede him by pursuing his own concerns and methods further than he could himself (because of the circumstances of his own propensities and the limitations of his age). It is in this light that I hope to have presented Albrecht Ritschl's theological work for renewed consideration and appreciation--as an instructive example of a theologian who attempted--and who did not fail utterly--to erect a genuinely Catholic Christian theological edifice in the setting of nineteenth century, post-Schleiermacherian, Protestant German theology.

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